

Xico steals
ach on rival



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with the
public interest



Anne-Sophie Mutter:
from Wunderkind
to Wonderwoman

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MARKETS REACT WITH UNDISGUISED GLEE TO LAFONTAINE'S DEPARTURE • TECHNOCRAT CHOSEN AS NEW FINANCE MINISTER

Schröder tightens grip on German coalition

By Ralph Atkins and Frederick Stichmann in Bonn

Gerhard Schröder, German chancellor, yesterday stamped his authority over his centre-left government, accepting the nomination of party leader and signalling a fresh start in relations with German business after the dramatic resignation of Oskar Lafontaine.

Mr Schröder appointed Hans Eichel, the technocrat prime minister of Hesse, to replace Mr Lafontaine, the mercurial left-winger who quit as finance minister and party leader on Thursday night.

Financial markets reacted with elation to Mr Lafontaine's departure, with Germany's Xetra Dex stockmarket index closing up 5.1 per cent at 5031.05 in the hope of revisions to the government's controversial tax policy. Insurance and utility companies rose particularly strongly.

Mr Schröder is due to visit the UK on Tuesday where he is expected to seek stronger ties

with Tony Blair, the UK prime minister, through the creation of a common pro-business platform for tackling low growth and high unemployment in Europe.

Downing Street has reacted with undisguised glee to the departure of Mr Lafontaine, a constant thorn in Mr Blair's side. Mr Schröder's camp sees an alliance with Mr Blair's "Third Way" as a means for strengthening the case for economic reform in Germany.

Mr Schröder's move to combine the party chairmanship and chancellery reverses his earlier decision to share power with Mr Lafontaine. The move marks a repeat of the role of Willy Brandt, his SPD predecessor as Chancellor 30 years ago.

Mr Eichel, a tax expert, will only become finance minister after stepping down on April 7 as Hesse prime minister. Until then, Werner Müller, economics minister, will take on the finance minister's responsibilities. Mr Lafontaine's tax legislation, which closes many loopholes enjoyed by

industry without compensating cuts in the main rates, would complete its parliamentary approvals on March 16 as planned, Mr Schröder said.

But changes could follow in a separate reform of corporation tax due to take effect from next year. Mr Schröder said his administration could not afford to be "hostile to business".

The left-wing Mr Lafontaine provided an important bridge between the SPD and its Green party coalition allies. But the two governing parties closed ranks yesterday, with Mr Schröder insisting "the survival of the government, and that includes the coalition, is not in danger".

Rezzo Schlauch, the Green's parliamentary leader, said his party was "determined to continue the coalition" with an emphasis on sending "positive signals to business and consumers".

The abruptness of Mr Lafontaine's departure and his refusal to comment publicly left Bonn bewildered yesterday. Even Mr

Schröder had been unable to reach him by telephone.

Aides said he was looking for tax changes that created a "greater dynamism" with significantly lower rates stimulating economic activity and thus increased tax revenues.

Mr Lafontaine had incensed industry with his "socially just" changes pitched largely at workers and families. Industry associations called for a radical rethink of the government's tax plans.

Several of Germany's largest companies have threatened to insist on transfer activities overseas.

Underlining the knock-on effects of Mr Lafontaine's resignation beyond Germany's borders, the Franco-German economic summit, which was due to be held on March 23 in Aix-en-Provence, has been postponed indefinitely.

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German chancellor Gerhard Schröder, right, with Hans Eichel, his choice to succeed Oskar Lafontaine as finance minister, at an SPD meeting in Bonn AP

Yehudi Menuhin dies at 82 in Berlin

By Andrew Clark, chief music critic

The world of music lost an outstanding figure yesterday with the death at the age of 82 of Yehudi Menuhin, one of the last links to the great violin tradition of the 19th century. Lord Menuhin, who died in a Berlin hospital, had been taken ill on a tour of Germany while conducting the Sinfonia Varsovia.

A child prodigy, he gave his first public concert at the age of seven and by his teens was internationally renowned for his brilliant technique and interpretative depth. But Menuhin was much more than a violinist. He used his musical gifts to further his humanitarian view of the world, establishing a voice that was respected far beyond the confines of the music business.

Born in New York of Russian immigrant parents, he was one of the first Jewish artists to visit Germany after the Holocaust. He used music as a vehicle for peace and reconciliation, and became a tireless campaigner for international understanding.

Menuhin founded the Gstaad music festival in Switzerland and a music school at Stoke d'Abernon in the UK, from which several of today's leading performers benefited, including Nigel Kennedy. He continued his solo career into his sixties and was equally happy collaborating in the performance of Indian music with Ravi Shankar and jazz with Stephane Grappelli. He was a staunch advocate of yoga, which he once demonstrated by conducting the Berlin Philharmonic standing on his head.

He settled in the UK in 1958 and became a British citizen in 1965. Among his numerous honours were the Order of Merit and membership of the House of Lords.

Genius who fought prejudice, Page 5
Anne-Sophie Mutter, Weekend FT

Congress demands right to veto China's WTO accession

By Nancy Dunn in Washington

The US administration's policy of "engagement" with China was attacked on Capitol Hill yesterday as senior members of both parties supported legislation allowing Congress to veto China's accession to the World Trade Organisation.

The onslaught was spearheaded by Senator Jesse Helms, Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee and Senator Ernest Hollings, the committee's senior Democrat.

They circulated a letter urging

Congress to "review any agreement, and all the surrounding negotiations to ensure that it reflects traditional American values while protecting American interests."

Richard Gephardt, House minority leader, has introduced a bill requiring congressional approval of a US-China WTO deal. Forty members have signed. This week it gained the support of Benjamin Gilman, chairman of the House foreign relations committee, and a Republican moderate.

The letter follows reports that

a deal is close on the terms upon which the US would support China's WTO membership.

Legislators appear to believe that by encouraging China's accession to the WTO, Bill Clinton, US president, has taken a step too far when US-China relations are at a low point.

Both Republicans and Democrats are angry about China's worsening human rights record, reports of spying to secure US missile technology, improper technology transfers, the infusion of Chinese money in last year's election and the growing bilateral trade deficit. The legislation, if passed, could be vetoed by Mr Clinton but it would increase pressure on the administration to take a harder line on Chinese accession to the WTO.

"The contentious US-China issues should be moving toward resolution before any agreement is reached," said Senators Helms and Hollings in their letter.

"Unfortunately, that is not currently the case."

The administration took a hard line on China's WTO membership until this year. It now argues that disputes over trade with Beijing can be settled more expeditiously in a multilateral framework. Bilateral pressure on China to improve market access and lower tariffs has produced only rare successes.

Mr Gilman has been pressing the administration to support, at the next annual meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, a declaration criticising Beijing for human rights abuses in China and Tibet.

The US withheld its support from such a resolution last year

in the hope that quiet diplomacy

would achieve more. This year's annual State Department support on human rights found China's record to be worsening.

Mr Clinton this week defended his policy of "engagement" with China. He said it had made possible China's signing of international treaties controlling chemical weapons and nuclear testing.

It had also restrained China's nuclear sales to Iran, Pakistan and North Korea and had brought cooperation in the Asia economic crisis.

The US withheld its support from such a resolution last year

in the hope that quiet diplomacy

News General

KLA backs Kosovo peace deal

Military and political commanders of the ethnic Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) passed a decision yesterday to sign the western-drafted peace plan for Kosovo that would give the Serbian province broad autonomy enforced by some 28,000 Nato troops. But Slobodan Milosevic, Yugoslav president, reiterated after meeting Igor Ivanov, Russia's foreign minister, that Belgrade would not accept foreign troops on its territory. International, Page 4

Santer calls fraud report meeting

European Commission president Jacques Santer has called a special session of the body's 20 commissioners to discuss a potentially damaging report on fraud, mismanagement and nepotism within the European Union's executive. Europe, Page 2

BNP chief playing for high stakes

Banque Nationale de Paris head Michel Pébereau faces a testing time in his attempt to merge with Paribas and Société Générale to create France's largest bank. Page 7; Bid spurned, Page 23

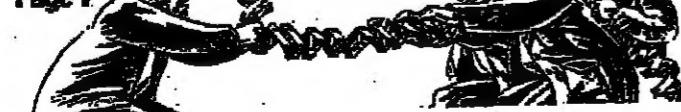
Gates makes the connection in China

Microsoft chief Bill Gates is the talk of China after he struck the most ambitious Internet deal by a foreign company in the world's most populous market. Page 7

Fighting crime with DNA

America is contemplating creating a DNA databank of all those arrested. Law enforcement hope to use it to make a quantum leap in fighting crime. But the proposal has provoked conflict between law enforcement officials and civil liberties activists.

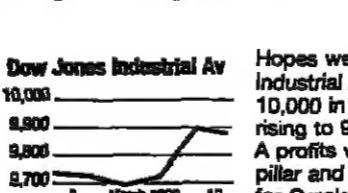
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Country	Capital	Population	Local currency	Chosen date
Austria	Vienna	7.5m	Euro	1999-01-01
Bahrain	Manama	1.5m	Dinar	1999-01-01
Belarus	Minsk	10m	Rubel	1999-01-01
Belgium	Brussels	9.5m	Euro	1999-01-01
Bulgaria	Sofia	7.5m	Leva	1999-01-01
Burkina Faso	Ouagadougou	10m	Franc CFA	1999-01-01
Burundi	Bujumbura	5.5m	Franc	1999-01-01
Croatia	Zagreb	4.5m	Kuna	1999-01-01
Cyprus	Nicosia	0.7m	Pound	1999-01-01
Czech Rep.	Praha	10m	Koruna	1999-01-01
Denmark	Copenhagen	5.2m	Krona	1999-01-01
Egypt	Cairo	75m	Leva	1999-01-01
El Salvador	San Salvador	5.5m	Colon	1999-01-01
Equatorial Guinea	Malabo	0.5m	Franc CFA	1999-01-01
Eritrea	Asmara	4.5m	Nakfa	1999-01-01
Estonia	Tallinn	1.5m	Kroon	1999-01-01
Finland	Helsinki	5.2m	Euro	1999-01-01
France	Paris	58m	Euro	1999-01-01
Greece	Athens	10m	Drachma	1999-01-01
Iceland	Reykjavik	0.25m	Icelandic króna	1999-01-01
Iraq	Baghdad	22m	Dinar	1999-01-01
Ireland	Dublin	3.5m	Euro	1999-01-01
Italy	Rome	55m	Lira	1999-01-01
Jordan	Amar	4.5m	Dinar	1999-01-01
Kazakhstan	Nursultan	15m	Tenge	1999-01-01
Kenya	Nairobi	28m	Shilling	1999-01-01
Kosovo				
Kuwait	Kuwait City	2.5m	Dinar	1999-01-01
Lithuania	Vilnius	3.5m	Litas	1999-01-01
Luxembourg	Luxembourg	0.25m	Euro	1999-01-01
Macedonia	Skopje	2.5m	Denar	1999-01-01
Malta	Valletta	0.35m	Euro	1999-01-01
Moldova	Kishinev	3.5m	Leu	1999-01-01
Morocco	Rabat	28m	Dirham	1999-01-01
Myanmar	Yangon	45m	Kyat	1999-01-01
Niger	Niger	10m	Franc CFA	1999-01-01
Nigeria	Abuja	100m	Naira	1999-01-01
Poland	Warsaw	38m	Zlote	1999-01-01
Romania	Bucharest	22m	Leu	1999-01-01
Russia	Moscow	140m	Ruble	1999-01-01
Slovenia	Ljubljana	2m	Euro	1999-01-01
Sri Lanka	Colombo	18m	Rupee	1999-01-01
Sudan	Khartoum	25m	Leva	1999-01-01
Tunisia	Tunis	8m	Dinar	1999-01-01
Ukraine	Kiev	45m	Hryvnia	1999-01-01
Yugoslavia				

News Business

High hopes of 10,000 recede



WORLD NEWS

EUROPE

LAFONTAINE'S DEPARTURE: UK AND GERMANY TO PUBLISH REFORM PROSPECTUS OUTLINING JOINT PLANS TO TACKLE LOW GROWTH AND HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT IN EUROPE

Resignation set to boost Bonn-London axis

By Andrew Parker,
Political Correspondent

The forced resignation of Oskar Lafontaine, the leftist German finance minister, is expected to accelerate efforts to strengthen ties between Tony Blair, UK prime minister, and Germany's Chancellor Gerhard Schröder.

In the next month, the UK and German governments will publish a reform prospectus, outlining how the

two governments would like to tackle low growth and high unemployment in the European economy.

Downing Street has made no secret of its delight over Mr Lafontaine's departure, believing it will allow Mr Schröder to make a decisive shift away from the neo-Keynesian policies favoured by Mr Lafontaine, the former finance minister who resigned on Thursday.

But it will also mark a significant milestone in the Anglo-German relationship that Mr Blair has been keen to strengthen in his drive to increase British influence in the European Union.

The 20-page prospectus, entitled "The Way Forward for Europe's Social Democrats", will flesh out the "third way" in politics, or "neue Mitte", espoused by Mr Blair and Mr Schröder. The declaration will encapsulate Mr Blair's belief that

reform of capital and labour markets is the best basis for creating jobs across the EU, and outline "supply side policies for the left".

It will argue that much European unemployment is structural. "Attempts to reduce the structural component through macroeconomic measures alone without tackling the root causes will be self-defeating," it is expected to say, in an implicit rejection of Mr

Lafontaine's strategy.

The declaration will stress the need for macroeconomic stability: a reference to a stable European single currency.

A London official said: "This document will be significant in that people may look at it and say this marks a shift in the European consensus on how to deal with the twin problems of low growth and high unemployment."

The personal and ideological chemistry between Mr Blair and Mr Schröder is strong. Several of Mr Blair's advisers spent time before the German election last October helping the Social Democratic party model its campaign on Labour's victory of 1997.

The potential confluence of UK and German centre-left politics was confirmed in a book last year by Bodo Hombach, German chancel-

lor minister, entitled *Awakenings: The Politics Of The New Centre*. A translation of the book is to be published in the UK with a foreword by Mr Blair.

Mr Blair and Mr Schröder agreed last November to produce the prospectus, but Mr Lafontaine made matters difficult by promoting European tax harmonisation.

**Editorial Comment, Page 8
Man in the News, Page 7**

Clash of Thunder Gods leads to opportunity to start afresh

Now Lafontaine has gone, Schröder can take up his election promise to create a new political centre, writes Ralph Atkins

After the battle of the Thunder Gods, there was a sweetness in the air in Bonn yesterday.

Oskar Lafontaine's spectacular resignation on Thursday ended a highly charged confrontation between the finance minister and chancellor of Europe's largest economy. Mr Schröder has emerged the clear winner and is now free to start afresh.

Although looking drained yesterday, Mr Schröder was already pushing home his advantage. A series of parliamentary and party meetings had been prepared for the airbrushing of Mr Lafontaine's brief but brutal contribution from Germany's political scene.

Mr Schröder will take over the party chairmanship himself. In comes Hans Eichel, the dour state prime minister of Hesse, central Germany, as his - presumably - loyal finance minister.

Once the immediate sense of crisis has evaporated, the complete downfall of Mr Lafontaine should give Mr Schröder the chance to relaunch his government, to pick up from his election

campaign last year which he won on the idea of creating a new "political centre".

Mr Lafontaine's departure could even have set the stage for a change of tone comparable with the turnaround executed by French President François Mitterrand in 1983, when a full-blooded socialist programme was thrown into reverse in the face of strong rightwing governments in Germany and the UK.

Mr Mitterrand's government had two years in power before executing its *volte face*. Mr Lafontaine concurred that process into little more than four months before his politics met the combined resistance of the European Central Bank and German businesses threatening to relocate abroad.

For now, Mr Schröder is moving carefully. He has pledged "continuity" in policy: that Mr Lafontaine's tax legislation will reach its last parliamentary stage next Friday as planned (although this does not rule out the possibility of amendments). The "super" finance ministry, including departments taken by Mr Lafontaine from

the economic ministry, will not be dismantled immediately.

But the chancellor has emerged with a stronger grip over his party and his coalition allies, the environmentalist Green party. He has a cabinet without obvious heavyweight dissenters. The only exception - Jürgen Trittin, the Green environment minister - came out the loser this year in a confrontation with Mr Schröder over the pace of a planned withdrawal from nuclear power. It was Mr Trittin, as much as Mr Lafontaine, whom the chancellor had in mind when he warned his cabinet this week against overburdening industry.

Now there will be less resistance to an agenda building on Mr Schröder's campaign promises: deregulation, personal provision to supplement the state pension system, and working with industry to cut unemployment.

The tools are already in place. His "alliance for jobs", bringing together employers, unions and the government, has an institutionalised

form, with a myriad of committees (including on tax policy), under the chancellor.

Mr Schröder has consistently pushed for an internationally competitive top corporation tax rate of 35 per cent (compared with rates of 60 per cent or more at present). It was never clear if Mr Lafontaine would accept such a proposal - at least not without recouping the costs from somewhere else.

Now it will be the focus of a new tax reform package.

A markedly pro-business agenda would not be easy for the fundamentalist wing of the Greens and traditional Social Democrats to accept - hence Mr Schröder's caution yesterday. Mr Lafontaine's radicalism provided a natural bridge between the SPD left wing and its coalition allies. But there are modern-

ising voices in the Greens too. And the Greens know that Mr Schröder has alternatives as coalition allies.

The market-oriented Free Democratic party, Helmut Kohl's junior coalition ally, is coming increasingly into play. Within hours of Mr Lafontaine's resignation, the government struck a deal with the FDP on reform of the country's 86-year-old nationality laws.

The FDP's support should ensure the new citizenship law's approval in the Bundesrat, or second chamber representing the 16 federal states, where the governing parties no longer have a majority.

The signs are the Greens will stay put, even if their ideas - such as on withdrawing from nuclear power and reform of citizenship laws - are diluted or blocked.

There are other difficulties

facing the chancellor. Not all the government's problems can be blamed on Mr Lafontaine. In foreign policy, it has been Mr Schröder who has engineered difficulties with European partners, particularly France, over European Union reform. He also backed Mr Lafontaine's ideas on tax harmonisation that so infuriated London. At home, the increasing focus on rebuilding consensus within German society often appears as a policy of muddling through.

Like Mr Lafontaine, the chancellor may find it impossible to combine the jobs of party chairmanship and a senior government post. Mr Kohl was also chairman of his Christian Democratic Union, but the SPD is more rebellious - and Mr Schröder, a former state prime minister in Lower Saxony, has never been as warmly embraced by the party rank-and-file as Mr Lafontaine. The SPD's youth wing rejected his nomination as party chairman.

But this week Mr Schröder demonstrated his mastery as a politician. His stand-off with Mr Lafontaine was a textbook showdown. The chancellor was level-headed and cool. He never let frustrations with Mr Lafontaine appear in public, and yesterday he acted the injured man. But he correctly judged just how much leeway to give Mr Lafontaine. In the event, the former finance minister brought about his own downfall.

Few thought it would come to a conclusion so quickly. Now Mr Schröder has the chance to rewrite the script himself.

Reason minister quit still a mystery

By Ralph Atkins in Bonn

Oskar Lafontaine's final hours as finance minister to Europe's economic powerhouse began with a cabinet meeting in Bonn at 9.30 on Wednesday morning.

Gerhard Schröder, the German chancellor, had chosen the occasion to dress down his colleagues. He warned that the government could not afford to alienate business - or the majority of the population. His tone, says Uwe-Karsten Heye, the government spokesman, was "aggressive".

According to Mr Heye, the finance minister was not Mr Schröder's target. In fact, Mr Heye insisted Mr Lafontaine had supported the chancellor's line, although it was the finance minister who had infuriated industry with his tax legislation.

Later on Wednesday, the finance minister and chancellor met, along with Rudolf Schäping, the defence minister, for what Mr Heye described as an "amicable" meeting. There were, he said, no signs that Mr Lafontaine was thinking about resigning.

By Thursday, the German media were speculating that it was Mr Schröder who had threatened to resign. That morning, Mr Lafontaine was in his office, engaged on official business. His last appointment was at lunch time.

The rest, however, is more mystery than history.

At some point after noon, Mr Lafontaine left the Bonn ministry for his native Saarland. He communicated his resignation as finance minister, party chairman and a member of the Bundestag, Germany's lower house of parliament, by letter.

At no point on Thursday did he talk to Mr Schröder, with whom he had worked for years in opposition as well as more recently in government.

Even close advisers were not informed of his decision to resign. He did not waste time clearing his office. His personal effects were still being tidied up yesterday.

Shortly before 6pm, Mr Lafontaine's resignation as finance minister was announced by the federal press ministry. Minutes later, the Social Democratic party announced he was standing down as chairman.

Mr Schröder had made attempts to get hold of him, says Mr Heye, "but these were not successful".

The terse resignation letter, the refusal to speak to Mr Schröder, the hurried flight to his house in Saarland, on the French border - all of these have since stirred the mills of rumour into action.

It was clear Mr Lafontaine was engaged in a power struggle with Mr Schröder. But speculation was rife yesterday that there might have been some quite unrelated cause: perhaps personal pressures, stress, frustration or simple pique.

In Bonn yesterday, no official explanation for Mr Lafontaine's resignation was forthcoming. Mr Schröder refused to speculate on his motivations".

Asked if anybody in the finance ministry knew why Mr Lafontaine had quit, Torsten Albig, spokesman, said: "No".

Business gloomy over Lafontaine legacy

By Uta Harnischfeier
in Frankfurt

A day after the resignation of the man known to German industry as "Red Oskar", there was as much caution and lingering bitterness in corporate Germany as any sense of celebration.

Hans Eichel has always been a pragmatic and reasonable partner for us and he always showed a lot of understanding for industry's viewpoints," said Jürgen Dornmann, chairman of Frankfurt-based German pharmaceutical maker Hoechst.

Highest on the list of industry's priorities, however, is securing changes to the government's tax reforms, which passed through Germany's Lower House of parliament last week and were masterminded by Mr Lafontaine.

"Mr Lafontaine never understood that for a country like Germany, which depends heavily on exports... it is crucial to be internationally competitive," said Martin Wansleben, vice-president of the German machinery industry association.

There was, however, hope that better times were ahead with the appointment of Hans Eichel, the outgoing prime minister of Hesse, as Mr Lafontaine's successor.

Jacques Santer, president of the European Commission, yesterday announced a special session of the body's 20 commissioners on Monday night, to discuss a potentially damaging report on fraud, mismanagement and nepotism within the European Union's executive.

The meeting of the "college" of commissioners will come just hours after the five-member experts' group delivers its report to Mr Santer and José María Gil-Robles, the president of the European Parliament.

The experts' group was appointed late in January as part of a compromise to avert a vote of censure by the parliament that would have forced all 20 commissioners to resign. The panel has since interviewed eight commissioners, including Mr Santer.

Should the report single out individual commissioners for wrongdoing, Mr Santer will come under heavy pressure from members of the European Parliament to force their resignation.

Alan Donnelly, a British MEP and leader of the European Parliamentary Labour

Industries in the Hesse region, which includes Frankfurt, were looking for Mr Eichel to continue his style of open dialogue with industry and his support for high-tech industries.

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It is not clear whether Mr Eichel will be able to deliver on this front. Gerhard Schröder, Germany's chancellor, said yesterday the tax reforms to the upper house would continue as planned, although he added that changes would be possible later.

Most business leaders seemed resigned to the fact that other government policies, such as raising energy taxes to fund pension reform, and the long-term closure of Germany's nuclear power industry, would stay on the agenda.

Santer calls meeting to discuss EU fraud report

By Peter Norman in Brussels

Jacques Santer, president of the European Commission, yesterday announced a special session of the body's 20 commissioners on Monday night, to discuss a potentially damaging report on fraud, mismanagement and nepotism within the European Union's executive.

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Its interview with Edith Cresson, the education commissioner at the centre of allegations of fraud and nepotism, lasted 2½ hours. The group also interviewed Man-

uel Marin, a Commission vice-president for external affairs, who like Mrs Cresson was the object of hostile parliamentary resolutions in January.

In addition, the group interviewed Emma Bonino, in charge of the EU's Echo humanitarian programme, at the centre of a mismanagement probe. Erkki Liikanen, the budget, personnel and administration commissioner; João de Deus Pinheiro, the commissioner for relations with Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries; and Hans Van den Broek, whose responsibilities include the former Soviet Union. Sir Leon Brittan, the commission vice-president, has acted as a "political link" between the committee and the commission.

If the report does name individual commissioners, they will be able to see the relevant passages tomorrow.

FINANCIAL TIMES
Published by The Financial Times (Europe) GmbH, Nibelungenplatz 3, 6031 Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Telephone +49 69 996 4481. Registered as a Geschäftsführer and in Lizenzen by David C.M. Bell, Chairman, and Alan C. Miller, Deputy Chairman. The shareholder of The Financial Times (Europe) GmbH is Pearson Publishing Group, London, W1X 1LE. Shareholder of this company is Pearson plc, registered at the same address.

FRANCE:
Editor in Chief: Jean-Marc Marzolini, 42 Rue Boissiere, 75019 Paris, France. Tel: 01 5376 8254. Fax: 01 5376 8253. Publisher: S.A. Nord-Eclair, 1521 Rue de la Cour, F-93190 Roissy-CDG, France. Editor: Richard Lambert, ISSN 1428-7531. Commission Number One Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HL.

SWEDEN:
Responsible Publisher: Bradley P. Johnson. Advertising Director: Per Margaretha, 42 Östermalmsgatan, 113 40 Stockholm, Sweden. Tel: 08 500 246. Publisher: AB Kvicksilförläggare, Esse, Box 6007, S-550 06 Jönköping.
S: The Financial Times Limited 1999. Editor: Richard Lambert, c/o The Financial Times Limited, Number One Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HL.

ITALY:
Editor: Gianni Sartori, 10 Via XX Settembre, 10013 Genova, Italy. Tel: 010 550 06 10. Publisher: Gianni Sartori Editore, 10013 Genova, Italy. ISSN 1120-5422. Commission Number One Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HL.

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INTERNATIONAL

SATELLITE TELEVISION GOVERNMENT-OWNED AL-JAZEERA CHANNEL BREAKS THE MOULD

Arab world receptive to debate beamed from Qatar

By Roush Khalaf

Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer al-Thani may not seem at first sight to be a mover and shaker. He is a member of Qatar's ruling family and had spent most of his career as a pampered bureaucrat in the information ministry.

But since he started the government-owned al-Jazeera satellite channel two years ago, he has engineered something close to a revolution in the Arab world.

Al-Jazeera has become the darling of Arab viewers, offering them the simple but rare commodity of differing views.

It has also become the nightmare of Arab governments, which refer to it as the "suspicious channel".

It is with much amusement that Sheikh Hamad declares that the association of Arab radio and television broadcasters has just refused it membership. "We were told we had six months to abide by the association's code of honour and then apply again, but if offering

viewers different opinions is against this code, then we cannot give it up," he said in an interview.

In a region where information is tightly controlled by governments, al-Jazeera's programmes - the most popular are aptly named "More Than One Opinion" and "The Opposite Direction" - bring together government officials and opposition representatives for debate.

With many shows live, officials do not censor what is said. "Many people have been banned from the media in the Middle East, Islamic fundamentalists, for example," said Sheikh Hamad.

"We have no reservation about anyone. Let the fundamentalists express themselves and let the viewers make up their own minds."

Arab regimes have tried to resist the spread of satellite broadcasting without cracking down too harshly on ownership of dishes. Saudi media companies, which already control most pan-Arab newspapers, have

set up their own satellite groups, which offer sanitised programming inoffensive to Arab audiences and uncontroversial to Arab rulers. London-based Middle East Broadcasting (MBC), controlled by relatives of the Saudi monarch, for example, broadcasts only positive Saudi news.

Al-Jazeera is in many ways a political tool itself, used by Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, the young ruler of Qatar, to promote his country as a maverick in the Gulf.

The emir, who ousted his father in a 1995 bloodless coup, likes to irritate his neighbours and break taboos. To the alarm of other Gulf governments, he has been entertaining the idea of loosening the monarchy's absolute rule.

The emir abolished the information ministry after taking over and ending censorship. He also set up a \$150m, five-year budget to start up al-Jazeera and Sheikh Hamad, then deputy information minister,

was picked to run the station.

He was greatly helped by the collapse in 1996 of the BBC's Arabic channel - a joint venture with a Saudi company which could not survive government sensitivities. Many of the dismissed staff were hired and moved to Qatar.

Advertising is directly or indirectly controlled by governments in many parts of the Middle East and this does not work to al-Jazeera's advantage. But the emir can subsidise it as long as it suits his political purpose.

For now, Sheikh Hamad is counting faxes streaming in from viewers and official complaints from governments, rather than advertising revenues. The most frequently disgruntled are the Kuwaitis, who accuse the station of bias towards their arch-foe Iraq.

Compared with other Arab stations - but not foreign networks - al-Jazeera's Iraq coverage is indeed extensive. When the US and Britain bombed Iraq last December,



Panelists on al-Jazeera's 'The Opposite Direction' debate the issue of minorities in the Arab world AP

MBC did not send anyone to Baghdad, while al-Jazeera had a large team. Two weeks later it was picked by the Iraqi government as the outlet for airing President Saddam Hussein's speech calling for a revolt in the Arab world.

Al-Jazeera carried the speech before it was broadcast on Iraqi television.

Al-Jazeera also regularly offends Islamist conservatives. One of its most popular programmes is "Sharia (Islamic law) and Life", in which a sheikh dares to reas-

sure women that, among other freedoms allowed by the Koran, they should not be forced to marry suitors designated by their parents.

"The sheikh is criticised by Islamic quarters, but what he is showing is that there has been confusion between culture and religion in the Arab world," said Sheikh Hamad.

"We have crossed all the red lines and dealt with all the taboos," said Sheikh Hamad.

"We now have a conviction that the future direction

has to be to give more freedom to the media in the Arab world. There are fax, the internet, and satellites now - you cannot live in an age that is not yours."

Fears ease over US wholesale prices

By Gautham Mallikarjun
in Washington

Fears that US wholesale prices are taking off were eased yesterday by a 0.4 per cent drop in the producer price index for last month, its largest fall in more than a year.

While economists expected some reduction because of declining energy prices, the size of the drop was helped by a 1.4 per cent fall in food prices, which are harder to predict. Producer prices excluding energy and foods remained flat.

The figure, released by the Labor Department, followed gains of 0.5 per cent in January and 0.4 per cent in December.

While the news lifted bond prices, Ian Shepherdson, chief US economist at High Frequency Economics, said the index did not necessarily indicate whether the Federal Reserve was likely to raise interest rates to tame inflationary pressures. "Under today's circumstances it's the wrong ball to be watching probably," he said.

Although PPI inflation overall appeared to be subdued, it was a "lagging indicator of inflationary pressures" and the Fed would pay more attention to wage pressures in an increasingly tight labour market.

Mr Shepherdson said the index was likely to increase next month because of the impact of recent oil price rises. He predicted a jump of 0.5-0.6 per cent.

Tim O'Neill, chief economist for Harris Bank and Bank of Montreal, added: "Our forecast of a modest rise in commodity prices later this year suggests that producer prices should start turning up slightly."

Energy costs fell 1 per cent in February, reflecting a drop in home heating oil prices and declining costs of residential gas and electricity. These offset increases for petrol.

Weak economies in Asia, Russia and Latin America have contained US inflation through cheaper imports and lower demand for farm products and raw materials.

Jerry Jasnowski, president of the National Association of Manufacturers, said: "While some industries, such as producers of steel and other commodities, have had to deal with increased competition, the economy overall has benefited from lower import prices."

Although figures revealed a slight upturn in the index for capital equipment, Mr Shepherdson attributed this to strong demand for cars and trucks and said it was "too early to get concerned about it".

In a separate report, the Commerce Department said total business inventories for January were up 0.1 per cent on December to \$1,088.1bn. Retailers in particular added to their stocks and wholesalers and manufacturers decreased inventories. Retail sales were up nearly 6 per cent from December to \$218bn.

The inventories sales ratio at the end of January was 1.38, slightly up from 1.37 in December but still well below the average level of the last five years.

Investors wary of Ecuador austerity plan

By Justice Newsome in Quito and Arindaj Ostrovsky in London

Foreign investors reacted cautiously yesterday to an austerity package for Ecuador, welcoming the government's intentions but casting doubt on its chances of success.

The measures, announced by President Jamil Mahuad on Thursday night, aim to stem Ecuador's worst financial crisis in decades. Hours after the package was revealed, the central bank's board of directors, including its president, was reported to have resigned.

Among the reforms to be put to Congress are an increase in value added tax from 10 per cent to 15 per cent, the removal of widely abused exemptions to VAT and the introduction of tough penalties for tax evaders.

The president also decreed increases in fuel prices of more than 100 per cent, to be partially revoked if Congress passed the VAT changes.

But Ecuador's dollar-dominated Brady bonds failed to rebound and yield spreads remained high, reflecting the market's scepticism about the government.

Investors' ability to overcome political opposition in Congress

Peter West, chief economist at BBV Securities, said: "These steps are pointing in the right direction, but Ecuador still has a long way to go before one could say it is on its way to stability."

It was confirmed yesterday that plans for a \$450m standby programme with the International Monetary Fund were still on track. However, the IMF is thought to have reservations about the lack of measures to resolve the underlying problems in the banking system.

Joyce Chang, emerging markets strategist at Merrill Lynch in New York, said: "Austerity measures were limited to the fiscal side and did little to solve the crisis in the banking system." She said investors were awaiting the reopening of banks, which have been shut since Monday.

Mr Mahuad unveiled measures to reduce the threat of a further run on banks, including a one-year freeze on half of current account balances over \$150 and a six-month freeze on half of savings balances over \$375. Fixed-term investment and bank loans must be renewed for a year.

PRESSURE ON SERBIA COMMITMENT OPENS WAY TO NATO THREAT

Kosovo commanders to sign peace plan

By Guy Dimmore in the Drenica region, Kosovo

Military and political commanders of the ethnic Albanian Kosova Liberation Army (KLA) passed a decision yesterday to sign the western-drafted peace plan for Kosovo that would give the Serbian province broad autonomy enforced by some 25,000 NATO troops.

The commitment from the KLA will allow the US and its allies to use the threat of NATO intervention to coerce the Serbian side into signing the deal. But Slobodan Milosevic, Yugoslav president, yesterday reiterated after meeting Igor Ivanov, Russia's foreign minister, that Belgrade would not accept foreign troops on its territory.

Mr Ivanov was in Belgrade to take over mediation efforts from Richard Holbrooke, US envoy, who also failed to persuade Mr Milosevic to agree to the deal.

Sources close to the Kosovo Albanian delegation, which hopes to fly to Paris today for peace talks that start on Monday, said a top-level meeting of about 25 KLA leaders in a secret location in the central Drenica region gave the final authorisation to Hasmil Thaci, the delegation leader, to sign the deal.

"Hasmil Thaci telephoned me to say that he was authorised to sign," one ethnic Albanian source said.

Official confirmation of the news was expected to be released later on the rebel army's Kosova Press internet website.

The decision had been expected but was thrown into doubt by resistance from hardline commanders who objected to provisions of the peace accord that call for the KLA to be disarmed within a month. They were also unhappy that there was no clear-cut guarantee that a referendum on self-determination

would be held at the end of the three-year interim period covered by the agreement.

Mr Thaci, head of the KLA political directorate and wanted by Serbian police for "terrorist" activities, slipped across the border from Albania into Kosovo to tell the regional commanders that the deal on offer was the best they could get.

The Kosovo Albanian delegation intends to try to fly to Paris aboard a French military aircraft from Kosovo's regional capital, Pristina. But this week the Serbian authorities reissued arrest warrants for three KLA members of the delegation and western officials were concerned that the team would not be able to leave in safety.

Sources close to the delegation said it was possible that Mr Thaci, if he made it to France, would sign the deal tomorrow.

Gates opens up.

The interview: On Wednesday. The book: Serialised from Thursday.

On Wednesday, in an exclusive in-depth interview, Bill Gates talks about the future of business and how you could win or lose as the information age speeds into a new millennium. And serialisation of his new book begins on Thursday - only in the FT.

FINANCIAL TIMES
No FT, no comment.

COMMENT & ANALYSIS

FINANCIAL TIMES

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Saturday March 13 1999

A farewell to Oskar

The arrival of Oskar Lafontaine at the German finance ministry after last September's federal elections was widely perceived to have tilted the European political balance decisively leftwards. The question after his unexpected resignation this week is whether the balance will now shift back again, so defusing the tensions he helped create within Europe and enhancing the prospects for overdue structural reform in Germany's flagging economy.

As yesterday's euphoric response in the markets implied, there is one rather paradoxical sense in which the departure of this unconstructed Keynesian has greatly improved the European outlook. The European Central Bank, which Mr Lafontaine had so persistently nagged in pursuit of lower interest rates, may feel it has greater freedom to respond to deteriorating conditions in the euro-zone.

Meanwhile, Gerhard Schröder is set to preside over a less fractious coalition as he prepares to assume Mr Lafontaine's former role as head of the party. His nominee for the finance ministry, the outgoing state premier of Hesse, Hans Eichel, is not expected to rock boats. Yet it would be foolish to assume that Mr Lafontaine's exit will guarantee harmony in Europe; still less a smooth passage at home.

Those in Britain who rejoiced at the departure of this determined tax harmoniser should remember that harmonisation was not an exclusively German preoccupation. There is a wider failure in Europe to grasp, for example, that the imposition of a withholding tax on bond interest will raise the cost of capital all across Europe because non-European investors will have to be compensated, in a global market, for the shortfall against the prevailing world rate of interest.

In Germany itself it is important to recall that Mr Lafontaine's success with Mr Schröder at the polls last autumn owed much to his understanding of voters' worries about the economy. Since then the economy has gone resolutely downhill. The former finance minister also represented a powerful strand of opinion in the Social Democratic party. This will remain an important political factor.

Angry revolt

What has unquestionably changed, as a result of this week's drama, is the relationship between government and business. Mr Lafontaine was an old-style taxer and spender who increased federal spending by nearly 7 per cent in this year's

budget. He simultaneously alienated business by redistributing large sums from the corporate to the personal sector.

Following their angry revolt over higher taxes, the leaders of German industry have claimed their scalp. They have also demonstrated that with globalisation politicians have to carry business with them if they want to prevent the erosion of the corporate tax base and the export of jobs abroad. The irony is that Mr Lafontaine had explained in a book before the election that globalisation was not to be feared.

Short order

If Mr Schröder's more amenable approach to business now pervades the coalition, it does not follow that all the difficulties of the German economy will be addressed in short order. While the German chancellor shares the modernising rhetoric of Britain's Tony Blair, he is committed to a consensual "alliance for jobs", which brings together state, unions and employers in deliberations over the economy.

So while it is true that the left in Europe may now have definitively abandoned Keynesian demand management, the main economies are still wedded to different forms of what might be called supply-side socialism. In Germany it takes the form of consensual policymaking. In France an unrepentantly dirigiste state is anxious to promote old-style national champions – witness the latest moves to reshuffle the economy.

Even in Britain a budget this week that contained many otherwise admirable features offered a confusing, 1970s-style welter of tax reliefs and other aids for research and investment for favoured parts of business.

The trouble with consensual policymaking is that it holds little promise of making significant inroads into heavy social security bills, nor of eliminating labour market restrictions that inhibit industrial restructuring. Takeovers are a poor instrument of rationalisation where, as in France, job guarantees are too often a condition of changed ownership. British tax tinkering does little for economic efficiency, but keeps accountants in work.

The focus on the micro-economy is necessary and desirable. The difficulty is that each governing party still brings historical baggage to the task. Mr Lafontaine's departure reflects the challenge this issue poses in Germany, where the stress imposed by economic and monetary union is at its most acute.

Over for Asia, notably in South

Next stop, 10,000? The Dow Jones Industrial Average seems on course for that benchmark. At one point yesterday it was just a few dozen points short. At the same time, its British cousin, the FTSE 100 index, was setting new highs. The problems that dogged world markets last autumn seem to be fading from the memory.

On the surface, the key to the revival is that Goldilocks is alive and prospering, albeit to different degrees, on both sides of the Atlantic. A Goldilocks economy, like the fairy tale heroine's porridge, is one that is not too hot to cause inflation, nor too cold to cause recession, but just right.

In the US, sure enough, economic growth marches briskly on without any sign of inflationary pressure. In the UK, the porridge might be tepid, but at least recession now looks less and less likely. It seems that Britain is avoiding the worst of its old boom-and-bust cycle.

But the economic news tells only part of the story. Underpinning the remarkable resilience of the US and UK equity markets has been the most obvious form of support for any commodity, from aluminium to zero-coupon bonds: a shift in the balance of supply and demand.

More money is pouring into equities, thanks to low returns on alternative investments (such as cash or bonds). But because companies are buying their shares back, or not issuing new ones, the supply of equity is shrinking in the US and the UK. With demand rising and supply falling, it is no wonder prices are up. As they used to say of land, it seems they aren't making equities any more.

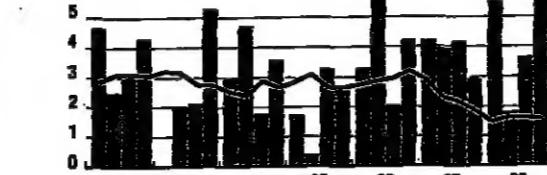
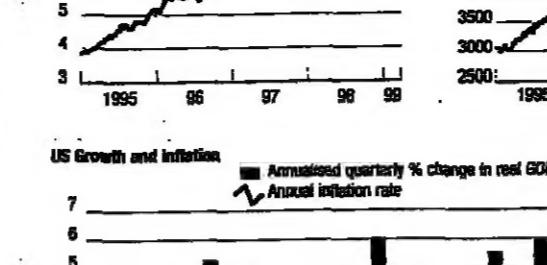
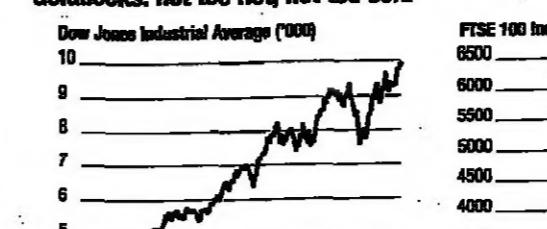
A figure like 10,000 on the Dow is, of course, just a number. But the imminent reaching of that landmark inevitably raises the questions: how much longer can this last? How imminent are the threats that might bring it to an end?

Back in the autumn, of course, it seemed as if the bull market was already over when Russia's default, the continuing crisis in Asia and the near-collapse of US hedge fund Long Term Capital Management appeared to threaten a global recession. Investors then fled equities for the safe haven of US bonds: the S&P 500 index dropped nearly 20 per cent, the Footsie 25 per cent and European markets 25 per cent in less than three months.

Fortunately for stock markets, central banks rode to the rescue, with the US Federal Reserve cutting rates three times, the Bank of England five times, and even the euro bloc managing a collective rate reduction before the introduction of the single currency in January.

Global growth is still not expected to be sparkling in 1999 and there are plenty of problem spots, such as Japan, Germany and Brazil. But the worst may be over for Asia, notably in South

Goldilocks: not too hot, not too cold



Korea: outside Germany, Europe seems on course for respectable growth; and above all, the US economy keeps charging forward. Economic growth was an annualised 8.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 1998, but as Alan Greenspan, the Fed chairman, said on Tuesday: "There have been no obvious signs of emerging inflation pressures."

The UK economy is enjoying nothing like the same kind of growth as the US. Even on the UK chancellor's forecasts, which many analysts feel are optimistic, UK GDP is expected to grow by only between 1 and 1.5 per cent this year. But expectations of recession, widespread in the autumn, have started to fade as survey data have indicated an upturn in business sentiment.

All this has reassured those who feared that corporate profits were about to be severely squeezed. According to IBES, the information company, US corporate earnings forecasts have been rising steadily since December.

And the corporate sector is playing a big part in fuelling the rise in share prices. At this stage of previous bull markets, notably in 1987, companies were falling over themselves to issue new equity to take advantage of high share prices. But not this time.

In the four quarters to the end of September, there was net retirement of some \$155bn of equity in the US, while in the UK the supply of equity was reduced by more than \$20bn in 1998.

Two factors have been behind this shift: takeovers and share buy-backs. Takeovers or mergers offer companies two advantages. At a time when low inflation and moderate economic growth make it hard to increase sales rapidly, mergers enable companies both to cut costs, which improves margins, and to achieve the scale needed to become a price-setter

rather than a price-taker in their sectors. As investors have recognised this trend, blue chip shares have outperformed small companies – increasing the incentive for companies to grow bigger by acquisition.

Share buy-backs have had an even greater influence than takeovers. There seems to have been a revolution in corporate finance, with managers accepting that surplus cash should not be hoarded but returned to shareholders. With cash paying a low return and debt tax-deductible, buy-backs also enhance earnings per share and reduce a company's cost per capital.

The result is that buy-backs normally drive share prices higher, something that managers

are looking even greater signs of being a bubble than before. The long bull market in equities, which began in 1982, has been accompanied by a similarly profitable era for bonds, which has seen yields fall to levels not known for a generation.

Falling bond yields reduce both the borrowing costs of corporations and the temptation for equity investors to switch out of the stock market in search of a higher income. But they also increase the theoretical valuation of equities. The value of shares is the future dividend, or earnings stream, discounted to the present day; as the discount rate (normally the prevailing bond yield) falls, then the present value of those future earnings increases.

Since 1982, the value of US equities has increased more than ninefold. Only a third of this has been due to a rise in corporate profits; the other two-thirds has come from an increase in the multiple, the price-earnings ratio, which investors have been willing to attach to those profits. The rise in that ratio has been closely correlated with the fall in bond yields; without it, on measures such as dividend yield or price-to-asset value, shares would look horrifically exposed.

But the strength of the US economy has unsettled the Treasury bond market, with investors fearing either that inflationary pressures will return or that the Federal Reserve will raise interest rates to head them off. The yield on the 30-year issue, which

dipped to 4.7 per cent in October, has risen to around 5.5 per cent, undermining the valuation case for shares.

The Fed keeps track of the relative valuation of shares by comparing the forward price-earnings ratio on the S&P 500 index with the 10-year Treasury bond yield.

There are some clouds on the horizon. Arguably the latest rally in US share prices in particular is

by last week, this showed equi-

ties looking 27 per cent overvalued. Such extremes of overvaluation had been seen only twice before: worryingly, that was in August and September 1987.

The UK stock market looks less ascribed as both price-earnings ratios and bond yields are lower than they are in the US. But as has been shown so many times in the past, London will not be able to escape a setback on Wall Street – and nor will anyone else.

A substantial fall in US equities would dent US and world growth.

What could bring a halt to the bull run? The most likely cause would be a realisation by investors that Goldilocks is starting to show her age. There are two opposite dangers, which cannot simultaneously be justified.

Some fear inflation. Part of the reason why inflation has been so low for so long has been the weakness of commodity prices, but the oil price has started to perk up in recent weeks. Without the support of falling oil prices, Lombard Street Research thinks US inflation could reach 4 per cent by the end of next year.

But the bigger fear is deflation, that the debt accumulated by governments, corporations and individuals over the past 20 years will prove to be an intolerable burden in a slowing economy. At some point, defaults will rise, creditors will start to demand their money back and the economy will suffer a credit crunch.

Optimists hope that the two forces will counteract one another and that neither threat will materialise. But the stakes are high. The US and European economies are dependent on the US to keep world growth moving ahead, and the US economy itself requires a rising stock market to keep consumer expenditure growing. Just getting to 10,000 on the Dow may not be enough.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Emotion goes beyond the game

From Andrew Christensen.

Sir, Any suggestion that football may have a north/south divide ("Allons, les Marseillais", March 6-7) cannot with any validity imply a comparative lack of emotion for the beautiful game in "industrial Catalonia".

Though the economies of Marseille and Barcelona may not be

equal, football club De Barcelone (el Barça) is, like Olympique de Marseille, celebrating its 100th anniversary in 1999. Comparisons of the onfield performance and success of both teams also extend to the terraces and beyond. The fanaticism and emotion that bind the Catalan spirit and outlook with el Barça as the "national"

team cannot be underestimated.

Anyone seeing el Barça playing

Real Madrid will know the emotion goes beyond the actual game.

Andrew Christensen,
145 General Mitre (6-7)
Barcelona 08022
Spain

Philosophical Hobb-nobbing

From Dr Elaine Sternberg.

Sir, As the provider of philosophy-based consultancy services I am pleased to read that philosophical clarity is now being valued more highly by non-philosophers. Helen Kirwan-Taylor's article "No brain, no gain" (How To Spend It magazine, March) would have been more convincing had it not confused Hobbes (the philosopher) with Hobbs (the retailer).

Elaine Sternberg,
principal,
Analytical Solutions,
c/o 18 Tamar House,
12 Tavistock Place,
London WC1, UK

HK and China

From Mr John Ure.
Sir, Your suggestion that Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal backed down in the face of threats from mainland China is based on the Court's statement that it "cannot question the authority of the National People's Congress or the Standing Committee" ("Hong Kong retreats in dispute with China", February 27-28).

But this sentence continued "to do any act which is in accordance with the provisions of the Basic Law and the procedure therein". The syllogism struggling to get out gets lost by truncating the statement.

John Ure,
Centre of Asian Studies,
University of Hong Kong

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COMMENT & ANALYSIS

MAN IN THE NEWS HANS EICHEL

Bland, but a relief

Frederick Stüdemann profiles the man who is stepping into the shoes of "the most dangerous man in Europe"

Two days ago Hans Eichel was a loser. Following the defeat of his Social Democrat-led government in state elections in Hesse last month, the outgoing leader of Germany's most prosperous state was clearing his desk before handing over keys of office next month.

Today, the loser of Hesse is poised to take charge of the finances of Europe's biggest economy. Mr Eichel, 57, was the surprise choice to succeed Oskar Lafontaine following the latter's sudden, and as yet unexplained, decision to resign as finance minister and withdraw from politics.

The dramatic change in Mr Eichel's fortunes is unusual in German politics, which tends to be conducted at a predictable, almost plodding, pace. For Mr Eichel, the lurch from provincial obscurity to the second most important position must have been beyond his wildest dreams.

So what qualities was Gerhard Schröder, the chancellor, looking for in the successor to the man dubbed by one British newspaper "the most dangerous man in Europe"?

The German press has described Mr Eichel as having "all the charisma of a damp noodle", and that, after the fiery Mr Lafontaine, may have been just what the chancellor ordered.

Mr Eichel may be bland, but he is also an expert on

German tax and, according to one of his colleagues, "a detail-obsessed file-eater" — talents he will no doubt put to good use at the finance ministry, especially now that tax reform is at the heart of German economic debate.

Fellow social democrats describe Mr Eichel as diligent, competent, and somewhat colourless, but also as someone who is a "consensus builder" — another quality which might come as a relief after the divisive Mr Lafontaine.

After a brief stint as a grammar school teacher, Mr Eichel worked his way up the local party organisation. During the Hesse election campaign, Mr Schröder conceded, with masterly understatement, that Mr Eichel did "not dance like Fred Astaire or sing like Caruso". Instead, he praised Mr Eichel for his "uncommonly competent, precise and honest political work".

Yesterday Mr Schröder reiterated his appreciation of Mr Eichel's unassuming manner and praised his "successful work in [Germany's] economically strong-

est state" (Hesse includes Frankfurt, Germany's financial capital). In the wake of the stormy, brilliant, arrogant and sometimes chaotic Mr Lafontaine, the chancellor was obviously looking forward to a quieter life with his new finance minister.

Mr Eichel has more attractions than just being the calm after the storm. For one thing, he will bring useful experience of working with the Greens, the junior partners in Mr Schröder's sometimes fractious coalition government. Mr Eichel was the first SDP politician to invite the Greens to share office when he put together a coalition to run the Kassel city council in 1981. Ten years later he turned again to the Greens to form a government in Hesse.

For another, Mr Eichel, like Mr Schröder, favours a pragmatic approach to politics. In Hesse, which he headed since 1991, Mr Eichel was sympathetic to the needs of business. "Mr Eichel knows the importance of German companies remaining competitive internationally," says Frank Nie-

thammer, head of the Hessian Industry and Trade Association. This marks a contrast to Mr Eichel's predecessor, whose economic policies incurred the wrath of many industrialists and provoked them into the threat of an unprecedented tax revolt, when they said they would take their companies outside Germany unless he changed his proposals to increase the tax burden on wealthy individuals and large companies.

Yet Mr Eichel was considered close to Mr Lafontaine. In the early 1980s, the two men belonged to the left wing of the SPD. Mr Eichel was even dubbed "the Lafontaine of Kassel", the north Hessian town where he was born and was eventually elected mayor.

It was Mr Eichel who did the back-room number-crunching that allowed Mr Lafontaine, when leader of the opposition party, to block tax reforms in the previous centre-right government of Helmut Kohl. Mr Eichel's mastery of detail proved a formidable asset when he was finance policy elected mayor.

But it is clear that Mr Eichel's role within Mr Schröder's government will be markedly different from that of his predecessor. Mr Lafontaine took over the finance ministry as reward for his successful management of the SPD election campaign and for his decision a year ago to stand

aside and let Mr Schröder run against Helmut Kohl for the chancellorship. As SPD chairman, Mr Lafontaine also had second power base in the party.

Mr Eichel possesses neither of these assets. He will be a direct appointee of Mr Schröder, and will be answerable to him. Meanwhile, Mr Schröder is expected to strengthen his grip on the SPD by making a bid for the party chairmanship at an extraordinary conference next month.

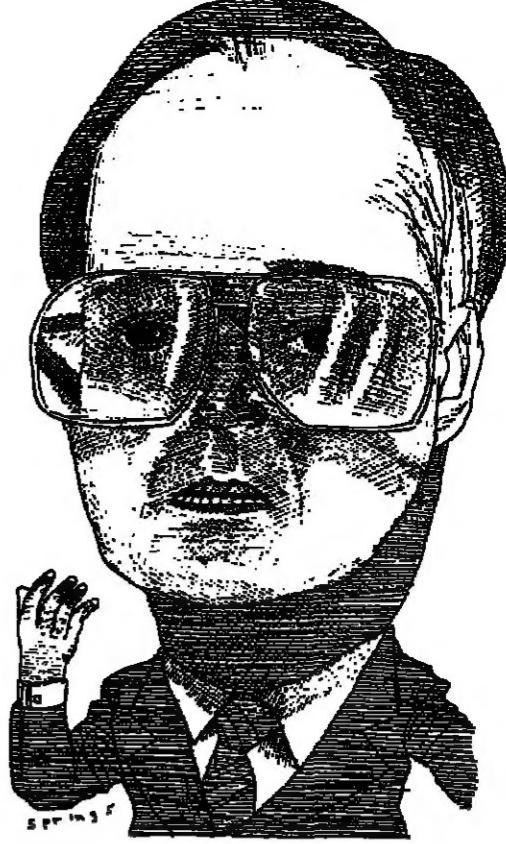
Mr Eichel will only formally take charge of the ministry when he officially stands down in Hesse next month. Until then the finance ministry will be run on an interim basis by Werner Müller, the economics minister.

The departure of Mr Lafontaine has removed Mr Schröder's only credible internal rival. This will give the chancellor a freer hand to pursue his consensus-building approach to politics. Mr Schröder has said he would like to cut Germany's top rate of corporation tax (which can be 60 per cent or more). Whether he will now implement that goal remains to be seen. But with Mr Lafontaine gone, finance policy is likely to be determined more in the chancellery than in the ministry's drab utilitarian offices in Bonn.

The result is likely to produce few of the fireworks which so distinguished the brief period in office of Mr

Eichel's predecessor. Judged by his record to date, Mr Eichel seems to prefer a solid, even a bland approach. More importantly, Mr Schröder wants that too.

All of which is no doubt desirable after the excitement as his eminent French counterpart.



Opening the Gates

James Kynge describes Microsoft's infatuation with China, and vice versa

Kelinjun, Qiaodian and Gaici are the three best-known Americans in China. That is to say, Bill Clinton, Michael Jordan and Bill Gates.

All of them, in different ways, personify the individual achievement that Communist China has sought to subdue for decades. But Mr Gates makes a two-fold appeal. Among older Chinese intellectuals who have seen a lifetime of creativity drawn in seas of conformity, he is the embodiment of what might have been. The admiration of the younger generation is less elegiac, driven by a raw aspiration to succeed.

"It was impossible until recently in China to turn an idea into a billion renminbi, let alone a billion US dollars," said Yang Rongkang, a young software engineer in Zhongguancun, Beijing's fledgling Silicon Valley. "Now, it just might be possible."

Events this week may have increased Mr Yang's chances further. Mr Gates's company, Microsoft, unveiled the most ambitious internet deal yet struck by a foreign company in the world's most populous market.

The largest software company in the world booked up with local information technology leaders to bring access to the internet to millions of Chinese television viewers.

The strategy is simple. Most Chinese households are too poor to afford a personal

computer, which cost locally Rmb 8,000-10,000 (890-1,200). But there are some 320m televisions in China. So Microsoft has developed Chinese-language software, called Venus, which will allow people to access the internet, do simple word processing and probably web shopping using their televisions.

This is made possible by the use of set-top boxes or video compact disc players which come with Venus installed.

The set-top boxes are to be produced by Chinese companies in co-operation with Microsoft. The boxes, into which Venus will be embedded (in an attempt to foil China's ingenious software pirates), are expected to cost around Rmb 1,500 — ie, much more affordable than a PC.

China, in short, is emerging as a giant test for Microsoft's ambition to merge the worlds of television and personal computers.

But at least as remarkable as the Microsoft deal is the conceptual shift that it demonstrates in official Chinese attitudes towards the internet. The borderless, unruly nature of cyberspace has long appeared as a threat to a government that censors and controls all local media.

Now the government seems ready, after months of anguished debate, to let a hundred websites flicker.

"We cannot become a strong country without being good at IT. We cannot be good at IT without the internet," said one official at the ministry of information industries this week. His



Big deal: Bill Gates is making Microsoft's presence felt in China

words were underscored by the authorities' move this month to slash internet access fees, and allow households to have a second phone line installed free.

The impact of such events may well be to touch off the kind of 'bullock unit' euphoria that — often prematurely — has extended the opening of several Chinese industries to foreign investors.

It is true that internet use is growing at a breathtaking rate: the number of users doubled in the last five months of 1998 to 2.1m. Many analysts believe the number will reach 10m by the end of this year.

But there are many obstacles. The development of e-commerce is hampered by the small number of credit card users in China and the huge number of forgers. Capacity is also a problem, with access slow or blocked at certain times.

But above all, as Microsoft and media giants such as News Corp and Disney have learned, success in the China market depends on the keenness of one's political antennae.

Microsoft lost face in 1996 when the Chinese-language version of Microsoft Windows 95 software kept throwing up political slogans such

as "communist bandits". The problem was solved only after the intervention of Beijing's security authorities.

Michael Eisner, Disney's chairman and chief executive officer, seems now to have repaired the damage done by Disney's 1987 film *Kundun*, with its sympathetic portrayal of the Dalai Lama, the exiled spiritual leader of Tibet whom Beijing reviles as a separatist. Disney is now in the running to build theme parks in Hong Kong and, possibly, China.

But for nobody was the fall from grace so emphatic or the comeback so arduous as for Rupert Murdoch, chairman and chief executive of News Corp. His remark in 1992 that satellite television and modern telecommunications posed an "unambiguous threat to totalitarian regimes everywhere" was taken seriously by the Chinese authorities.

It took five years to complete his return to favour. In December last year Jiang Zemin, China's president, "expressed appreciation for the efforts made by the world media mogul Rupert Murdoch in presenting China objectively, and cooperating with the Chinese press over the years".

He must have remembered this week how his brother

lik other members of the French establishment, Michel Pébereau tends to take life very seriously; like other graduates of the elite *grandes écoles*, he wears his intellectual skills on his sleeve.

But those watching the 57-year-old head of Banque Nationale de Paris explain his bid this week to create France's largest bank, by merging BNP with Paribas and Société Générale, saw a rather different persona.

Gone was Mr Pébereau's aloofness that terrifies subordinates at the bank. Red in the cheeks with excitement, he extolled the merits of his scheme as if he had just discovered the adrenaline of risk.

He is playing for high stakes. If the proposed three-way deal fails — and both Paribas and SocGen have so far rejected the offer — then Mr Pébereau's position in the close-knit world of French banking would be irretrievably damaged.

In the past, he has missed several big opportunities for banking acquisitions. Now he is playing with the careers of André Lévy-Lang, Paribas chairman, and Daniel Boulton, head of SocGen, who last month agreed their own friendly merger. If the two proceed with their union as planned, and leave Mr Pébereau out in the cold, BNP might begin to look small and vulnerable.

Mr Pébereau came to banking in 1982 via the treasury and after working with Valéry Giscard d'Estaing as finance minister. His elder brother, Georges, had already followed a path from the civil service to high finance.

He must have remembered this week how his brother

had launched, more than a decade ago, France's first hostile banking bid using his small investment group to target the newly privatised SocGen. The failed bid was at the time considered an act of megalomania.

Mr Pébereau first joined Crédit Commercial de France (CCF) and rose to prominence as the man who successfully presided over its privatisation.

At CCF he managed to steer the bank away from the booming real estate sector in the late 1980s, which was later to be the ruin of his main competitors. His

advisors say this was foresight and prudent management. Detractors claim this was no more than lack of entrepreneurship.

Mr Pébereau's experience at CCF made him a natural candidate to take the helm

of BNP in 1993, when the state had decided to shed its stake, a banker involved with the deal remembers.

Last year he was outbid in the privatisation auction for CIC, a medium-sized bank, according to insiders. But the 48-year-old Mr Boulton, another civil servant turned banker, is understood to have politely refused this overture, preferring instead to proceed with plans for "SG Paribas".

So Mr Pébereau bid for them both. "It is not a question of BNP taking control of SocGen and Paribas, but rather the association of three banks to create a world leader," he said this week. However, in the light of Mr Lévy-Lang and Mr Boulton's clear earlier rejections of this being a "friendly" arrangement would appear either misplaced or naive.

Perhaps he is counting on the French establishment rallying round to ensure a national champion. After all, he taught economics to Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the Socialist finance minister who is watching over developments like a hawk.

Mr Pébereau also has a big ally in Claude Bébérard, the head of insurer Axa and one of the most influential figures in the country. Mr Bébérard is represented on the boards of all three banks, and Axa itself is a large shareholder in BNP and Paribas.

This week, Mr Bébérard appears to have had few second thoughts in backing Mr Pébereau, knowing that Axa stands to win either way.

For Mr Pébereau, however, it is all or nothing. In this culture of risk, so novel to French banking, he is gambling his reputation on the grand prize.

unconstitutional; the state will counter that its need to fight crime trumps the right to privacy.

But in the end, the real barrier to mass databanking could be logistical, says Harlan Levy, an expert on DNA evidence who testified before the national commission. Mr Levy points to the huge backlog of 450,000 untested samples already drawn from convicts. Testing everyone arrested would add 15m samples a year. "We have to walk before we can run, and when it comes to DNA we're barely crawling."

Whatever the constraints, DNA testing will remain the dream tool of modern policing. And as a sideline, it will continue to do its bit for the innocent — although a decision last month from the Virginia Supreme Court gives cause for concern.

The court was asked to release the DNA of a man executed in 1997, whose widow wanted to use new tests to clear his name. The dispute turned partly on who owned the DNA — the dead man or the state. The court refused to release the material.

In other cases individuals will continue to argue it is their, or their relatives', genetic material. The battle over DNA rights will run and run.

Whose DNA is it anyway?

Patti Waldmeir reports on the battles being fought in US courts over who owns genetic material — the individual or the state

database from convicted murderers, rapists and child molesters, to all those arrested.

The American Civil Liberties Union, long-time champion of individual rights, voiced outrage at the proposal, challenging it as an unconstitutional intrusion into the privacy of the individual.

Now Americans are contemplating a big new step towards that goal: the creation of a national DNA database of all those arrested for any crime, from jaywalking to murder. On the zero-tolerance principle that today's turnstile-jumper can be tomorrow's rapist, law enforcement agencies hope to use the database to make a quantum leap in fighting crime.

But the proposal has provoked conflict at the frontier where science meets the law. Skirmishes have already begun, pitting law enforcement officials against civil liberties advocates.

The noise of conflict was sharply amplified recently when the National Commission on the Future of DNA Evidence, an advisory panel appointed by Janet Reno, the US attorney general, began hearings on a proposal to extend the

and the coffee cup. Police secretly obtained DNA from Arohi Kee, whom they had arrested on a petty theft charge, by giving her a cup of coffee. They used the saliva left on the rim for a DNA test, and they arrested him on suspicion of a series of rapes and murders. His lawyers challenged this as a warrantless search, but prosecutors defended the move on the grounds that he "abandoned" the DNA on the coffee cup.

The case has regularly upheld searches of "abandoned" property, such as rubbish in a suspect's bin, and they will probably uphold this one.

For civil liberties advocates, the case conjures up visions of policemen trailing suspects everywhere, hoping they will sneeze and drop a Kleenex.

But for Howard Safir, New York City police commissioner, Mr Kee looks like the perfect poster boy for his own campaign to take

DNA samples from everyone arrested in New York City.

For the case illustrates DNA's greatest strength: as a tool to convict the guilty and exonerate the innocent. The DNA on the coffee cup was enough to clear an innocent suspect. And more importantly, Mr Kee's DNA in the database (where it would have ended up after a 1992 felony robbery conviction) might have allowed police to arrest him years earlier.

The case raises some of the same constitutional concerns facing the national commission. The fourth amendment to the US

Constitution is at issue: "the rights of the people to be secure... against unreasonable searches and seizures shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause."

Most DNA testing in criminal cases meets that standard, and is done not by

stealth, but after a showing of "probable cause". But DNA testing for databases does not require that showing.

State laws allow testing in those categories only. But extending the net to all those arrested may be a different matter. There is little evidence that mere suspects are likely to be repeat offenders, and to leave behind biological material like blood and semen in future crimes.

Most states allow testing in those categories only. But extending the net to all those arrested may be a different matter. There is little evidence that mere suspects are likely to be repeat offenders, and to leave behind biological material like blood and semen in future crimes.

The manner of testing will also affect the argument: Mr Safir is proposing a minimally invasive test, using oral swabs instead of the pin-prick blood test used, for example, in Massachusetts. This may help the courts get beyond their usual aversion to "beneath the skin" searches.

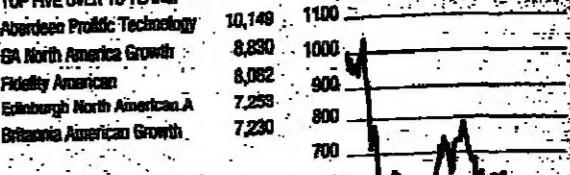
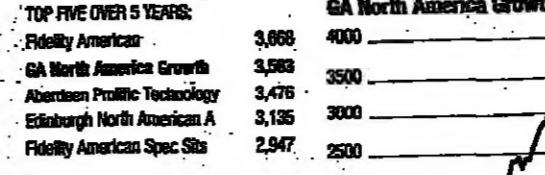
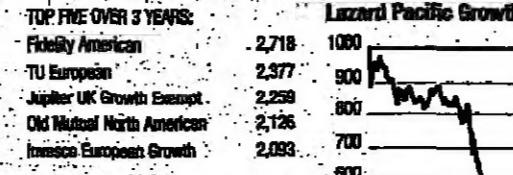
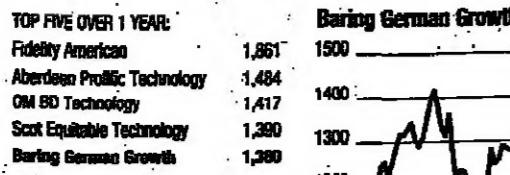
The hardest questions are those of principle. Opponents will argue that mandatory mass testing, in the absence of individualised suspicion of wrongdoing, is



DATABANK

UNIT TRUSTS

Winners and losers



Tables show the result of investing £1,000 over different time periods. Trusts are ranked on 3-year performance. Warning: past performance is not a guide to future performance.

Indices	1 year (%)	3	5	10	Volatily	Yield%
Average Unit Trust	1003	1273	1489	2778	44	2.4
Average Investment Trust	1007	1385	1512	2507	62	4.6
Bank	1043	1121	1208	1734	0.9	5.7
Building Society	1046	1113	1201	1735	0.0	5.4
Stockmarket: FTSE All-Shares	1082	1658	2071	3676	2.0	3.95
Inflation	1024	1088	1156	1472	6.3	-

UK Growth

	1 year (%)	3	5	10	Volatily	Yield%
Jupiter UK Growth Exempt	1175	2259	-	-	4.8	0.8
Exeter Capital Income	988	1949	2029	-	8.7	-
Lloyd TSB Environmental Inv	1098	1859	2155	-	3.9	1.5
Thornhill Capital	1094	1805	2003	-	4.0	0.6
Johnson Fry Sector Growth	986	1795	2140	4068	4.3	1.1
SECTOR AVERAGE	1001	1473	1722	2657	3.8	1.4

UK Growth & Income

	1 year (%)	3	5	10	Volatily	Yield%
Direct Line FTSE 100 Tracker	1087	1805	-	-	3.8	2.2
Fleming Select Lincome	1089	1785	2183	3054	3.8	2.8
River & Mercantile Top 100	1083	1777	-	-	3.8	2.3
First Direct MoneyBuilder Index	1094	1773	-	-	4.1	2.1
Laurence Klein Income & Growth	1043	1764	2014	-	3.7	2.9
SECTOR AVERAGE	1023	1528	1781	2379	3.7	2.0

UK Smaller Companies

	1 year (%)	3	5	10	Volatily	Yield%
INVESTEC Small Cos Acc (ST)	1161	1761	1643	-	4.3	2.2
Henderson Exempt Dystal	1059	1673	1742	-	4.4	1.8
Germain UK Smaller Co Inc	889	1532	2018	2345	5.1	1.1
BHD UK Smaller Cos	945	1504	1701	-	5.3	0.7
Laurence Klein Smaller Cos	977	1488	2153	-	4.4	1.5
SECTOR AVERAGE	924	1195	1365	1925	4.5	1.6

UK Equity Income

	1 year (%)	3	5	10	Volatily	Yield%
BMO UK Equity Income	1050	1739	2107	3388	3.4	3.2
Jupiter Income	1084	1708	2159	3433	3.3	3.2
Fidelity Income Plus	1035	1688	1858	2440	3.4	3.8
Investec GF Income Share	1058	1675	-	-	4.0	6.1
Dresdner RCM High Yield	1035	1632	1821	2908	4.0	3.7
SECTOR AVERAGE	933	1474	1892	2730	3.5	3.7

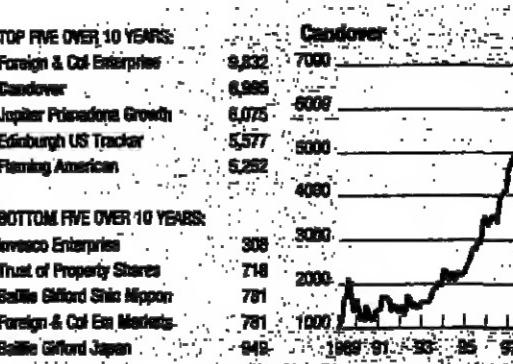
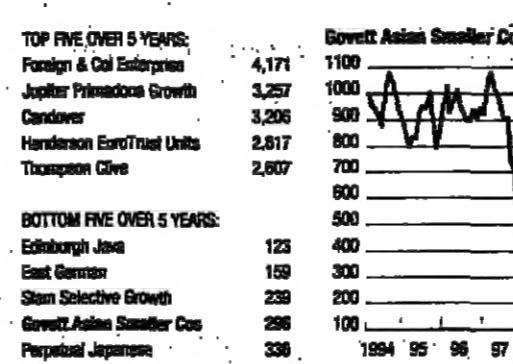
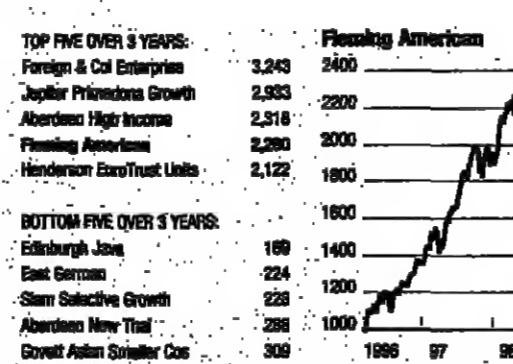
UK Equity & Bond Income

	1 year (%)	3	5	10	Volatily	Yield%
Edinburgh UK Income A	1034	1548	1729	2189	3.0	3.3
Abbey National Extra Income	1022	1531	1673	2226	2.5	4.1
Jupiter High Income	1030	1521	-	-	3.2	4.0
CIS UK Income	1004	1519	1730	-	2.9	3.2
CSU PFT High Yield	1055	1515	1659	2458	2.7	5.2
SECTOR AVERAGE	1004	1363	1540	2353	2.6	4.7

UK Equity & Bond Income

	1 year (%)	3	5	10	Volatily	Yield%
BMO UK Equity Income	1034	1548	1729	2189	3.0	3.3
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Investment Trusts



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Authorised and Insurances

Morgan Stanley Asset Management Ltd (1200MF)											
20 Finsbury Circus, London EC2M 1UT											
0800 020 176004											
American Govt											
\$471	852.2	+2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
All-Weather Fund											
\$105.55	105.55	-0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Asia Pacific Equity Fund											
\$12.74	13.4	+10.7	1.27	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Australia & New Zealand Fund											
\$10.00	10.00	+0.01	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Europe											
\$24.31	31.9	+8.45	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
European Govt Fund											
\$14.54	85.2	+0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Euro Fund											
\$12.00	12.0	+0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Euro Income Fund											
\$12.54	27.2	+2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Euro Bonds Fund											
\$12.54	27.2	+2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Euro High Income Fund											
\$12.54	27.2	+2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Euro Short Term Fund											
\$12.54	27.2	+2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Euro Small Cap Fund											
\$12.54	27.2	+2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Euro Large Cap Fund											
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Euro Smaller Cap Fund											
\$12.54	27.2	+2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Euro Smaller Cap Fund											

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Highs & Lows shown on a 52 week basis

WORLD STOCK MARKETS

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Dow st

INDEX FUTURES

	Open	Setl Price	Change	High	Low	Est. vol.	Open Int.		Open	Setl Price	Change	High	Low	Est. vol.	Open Int.
III. GAC-40 (MATIF/MONEP) (200 x Index)								III DAX							
Mar	4260.5	4175.0	-30.0	4298.0	4164.0	56,680	138,397	Mar	730.0	720.50	-1.75	733.00	720.00	12,440	118,500
Jun	4219.0	4138.0	-30.0	4161.5	4128.5	1,636	9,527	Apr	731.0	720.50	-0.50	731.00	720.50	1,846	5,500
III DAX								III EUREX							
Mar	5040.0	5035.0	+240.5	5072.0	4975.0	80,633	238,504	Mar	7281.0	7260.0	-19.0	7294.0	7245.0	25,097	125,500
Jun	5070.0	5065.0	+242.5	5102.0	5005.0	14,117	157,945	Jun	7225.0	7200.0	-40.0	7235.0	7191.0	3,205	29,500

* Sat May 6, Taiwan Weighted Price 64/173. Base values of all indices are 100 except Australia All Ord and Mining - 500; Angeles Industrial 96.28; MEX Gen. Ind. Gen. 540.25; SPP/SDI CAC40; SPI Euro Top-100; SEDO Overall; Toronto Comp/Mkt & Mkt. DAX - at 1,000; S&P 1500; JSE Top - 255.1; ASX 200 Ind 254.2; BMF Mid 100 - 1; NYSE All Common - 50; Stand & Poor's - 10 and Amex Comp - 50; S&P 500 Montreal + Toronto; (b) Current (p) Unaudited; (c) YE2000-01 after-tax basis; Mar 12 - 5881.05 +\$45.69

1 Corrections. * Calculated at 15.25 CAD. @ Excluding bonds. 2 Industrial, plus Utilities, Financial and Transportation. 3 The DJI Index (hereinafter the "Dow Jones and Dow Jones") are the averages of the highest and lowest price of the DJI 30 stocks listed on the New York Stock Exchange. The DJI and Dow represent the highest and lowest values that the index has reached during the official trading session.

John Marshall

Caterpillar loses grip as Dow stalls

AMERICAS

Wall Street was little changed in early trading as concern about fundamentals following a warning from Caterpillar and disappointment with Oracle weighed on sentiment, writes John Labeau in New York.

By early afternoon the Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 10.54 at 9,886.90. Caterpillar, a Dow stock, tumbled more than 10 per cent or 95¢ to \$45.63 after the industrial equipment producer warned about upcoming earnings growth.

But other Dow stocks gained ground, including Walt Disney, up 4 per cent at \$36.64 after an upgrade by BT Alex Brown. The Standard & Poor's 500 index was down 6.05 to 1,291.63.

Midday sentiment gleaned little comfort from a better-than-expected report on producer prices. Bonds rose on the release of the data. The long bond gained 4¢ to 93.16, yielding 5.540 per cent.

Oracle, the second largest software producer, plunged 21 per cent or \$7.92 to \$26.42 as analysts at Warburg Dillon Read and Nationshaw Montgomery Securities downgraded the shares one day after the company issued its quarterly earnings release.

The Nasdaq composite index, which is weighted in high-tech shares, was down 1.7 per cent or 42.43 at 2,389.82. Among internet stocks, Lycos fell 7.5 per cent at \$100.43 as uncertainty grew about its merger attempt with USA Networks.

But DoubleClick, the online advertising firm, was trading 5.06 easier at 4,874.75.

Jo'burg hits 1999 high

SOUTH AFRICA

Johannesburg closed at another high for the year, and at its best level since early August 1998, boosted once again by the overnight gains on Wall Street.

The overall index rose 55.0 to 6,440.1. Industrials gained

soared 10 per cent or \$11.7 to \$118.4 on stock split news.

Retailer Rite Aid fell 34¢ or 39 per cent to \$22.4 after the company warned about upcoming earnings.

Shares of Federal Mogul were down \$3.4 to \$40.4 as Merrill Lynch lowered its rating to "long-term accumulate".

TORONTO featured a strong performance in oil shares, but by mid-session, the broad market was mixed as Wall Street drew breath after Thursday's record-setting performance. The TSE-300 composite index was 21.76 weaker at 6,544.00 in weak volume of 26.3m shares.

News that the big oil producers had agreed to cut output by 2m barrels a day sent oil prices higher.

Among the large oil producers, Canadian Natural Resources rose C\$1.70 to C\$28.50. Canadian Occidental Petroleum picked up 60 cents to C\$16.60. Talisman Energy gained 65 cents to C\$29.60 and Shell Canada added 80 cents to C\$24.75.

CARACAS, 3.2 per cent higher on Thursday on hopes that oil production cuts would raise sagging crude oil prices, had put on another 2.3 per cent by mid-session yesterday. The IBC index was 92.72 higher at 4,058.17. Electricidad de Caracas, the market's benchmark stock, was 9 bolivars higher to 197 bolivars.

MEXICO CITY picked up ground in early trade. But by mid-session, the early gains had evaporated and the IBC index was trading 5.06 easier at 4,874.75.

ASIA PACIFIC

Shares in TOKYO inched lower yesterday in heavy foreign trading as investors locked in gains on the week.

Shares in Alzakura Nisshin.

The Nikkei 225 closed down 0.09 per cent or 13.28 to

EUROPE

The euro fell back in the foreign exchanges yesterday, but the "Lafontaine effect" was a positive factor for German equities, driving FRANKFURT up to within a whisker of 5,100 on the Xetra Dax index at one stage.

Insurers and power utilities lead the rally. Allianz and Munich Re both jumped more than 12 per cent and RWE and Veba were also in demand. Allianz ended €38.40 higher at €306 after touching a session best of €308.90. Munich Re added €22.40 to €204.40. RWE and Veba rose 5.30 to €17.20 and €4.20 to €52.50 respectively.

At the close, the Xetra Dax was up 24.65 or 0.5 per cent to 5,031.06, its best single-session gain since January 4 when the launch of the euro saw the benchmark advance 28.80.

PARIS ended lower, partly hindered by a dramatic swing in sentiment at BNP, which fell back from a peak of €88.20 to close off €8 at €80. The CAC-40 index ended off 9.35 at 17,633.

Oils also reversed recent gains with Total slipping

€4.50 at €106.5 and Elf Aquitaine off €4.40 to €114.5. Thomson-CSF, a strong market in early trading following an upbeat management statement, ended +1.48 lower to €28.02.

Renault rose 83 cents to €53.80 on revised speculation that the motor giant was poised to take a sizeable stake in Nissan of Japan.

LMVH pushed higher, adding €13 at €223.3 amid talk that peace could shortly break out in the bid battle for fashion label Gucci.

AMSTERDAM took in a bounce for chemicals leaders

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Akzo Nobel and DSM and further upward progress for market heavyweight Royal Dutch, which took its cue from a strong oil price.

Akzo gained €1.60 or 5.2 per cent to €32.60 and DSM €1.90 at €77.40. Royal Dutch improved 45 cents at €61.15 in spite of a downgrade to sell from Commerzbank.

Media group VNU was the day's chart-topper, rising €2.60 or 7.1 per cent to €39 as rivals Elsevier, down 30 cents at €12.60 and Wolters Kluwer, which lost €3 at €127.20, continued to wilt following disappointing results.

The yield on the 10-year government bond fell 4 basis points to 7.15 per cent. Analysts were not expecting the Bank of Japan policy board, which met yesterday afternoon, to announce further credit-easing steps. But Kiichi Miyazawa, finance minister, said that Masaru Hayami, governor of the Bank of Japan, might consider "quantitative easing" or targeting the money supply.

The real estate sector rose 3.1 per cent with the heaviest gains of the day. Real estate companies are heavily dependent on lending from banks, which recently received an injection of public funds and announced restructuring plans. Tokyo Land rose 7.25 per cent or Y10 to Y138. Mitsui Fudosan was up 2.8 per cent or Y30 to Y1,050.

Trading was heavy, with 1.19bn shares exchanged. Momentum was up with 697 issues advancing, 580 issues declining.

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SEoul pushed higher on foreign buying. Volume was again active at 247m shares and at the close the Kospi index was up 8.80 or 1.5 per cent to 590.00.

News that merchant banks would be allowed to write off restructuring losses over a three-year period sparked late demand for the sector. LG Merchant Bank rose

Won360 to Won4,030 and Daehan Investment added Won450 to Won5,000.

KUALA LUMPUR improved in thin volume as investors awaited the outcome of the eastern Sabah state elections. The composite index ended +0.82 or 1.1 per cent ahead of 528.79. Telekom rose 12 cents to RM8.00 and Tenaga galzed 15 cents to RM8.16.

HONG KONG was driven higher by the overnight rise on Wall Street, hopes for lower interest rates and strength in selected blue chips. The rate hopes were, however, dashed after the market closed when the weekly meeting of the Hong Kong Association of Banks left rates unchanged.

The Hang Seng index put on 10,918.76 after jumping early to 10,918.43, its highest level since November 26 last year.

One analyst noted that the bank had seen European demand as fund managers allocated more funds to Asia.

The banking sector closed down 0.1 per cent after climbing 6.7 per cent this week.

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COMPANIES & FINANCE

Enterprise pushes case for Lasmo merger

By Thorold Barker

Enterprise Oil, the UK's largest exploration and production company, yesterday argued that a merger with rival Lasmo made strategic sense and repeated that a final decision should be reached within three weeks.

The two companies have been talking since January, but progress has been slow because Lasmo is looking at other options. Pierre Jules, Enterprise's chief exec-

utive, said a deal could help accelerate his company's drive to rebalance its portfolio geographically and achieve more consistent returns. But the two sides still had to decide whether a deal was in shareholders' interests.

His comments accompa-

nied results for what Sir Gra-

ham Hearne, chairman,

described as the "toughest

year in the company's history". The collapse in the oil price and asset write-downs

of £20.7m pushed Enterprise into a pre-tax loss of £19.5m (£254.8m profit) for 1998. Turnover almost halved from £247m to £58.3m.

The final dividend was passed, as expected. Andrew Shilstone, finance director, said the pay-out would now be rebased from the full-year figure of 6.5p (17.4p).

He said the group had reduced costs across the board, with the cost per barrel falling from 56.29 to 25.53.

The group also announced

details of a restructuring, which will reduce its workforce by about 25 per cent. The move will save £20m a year and give more autonomy to Enterprise's operations in Aberdeen and overseas. There was a £10m restructuring charge this time.

Production for 1999 is expected to be 330,000 barrels of oil equivalent a day, down from estimates of 360,000 boed because of a reduction in drilling activity

in the North Sea.

Comment

Enterprise has some way to go before it achieves its aim of offering investors consistent returns. It has hatched at its cost base, but is still focused on high-cost areas like the North Sea, which will become increasingly difficult if oil prices remain low. A merger with Lasmo would help, giving it exposure to cheaper areas like North Africa. But Lasmo

is dragging its heels while it looks at other options and a deal is far from sealed. For Enterprise to make the transition by itself would take time. Meanwhile, its shares offer a chance to profit from any improvement in crude prices. But with an asset value of about 350p a share, there is not much upside from the current price of 311p - up 19p yesterday - unless investors believe the mini-rally in the oil price will continue.

New home wanted for Corgi collection

By Thorold Barker

Cinven, the UK venture capitalist, is believed to be seeking a buyer for Corgi Classics, the model vehicle maker. Most interest in the company - which could raise £30m-£40m - is likely to come from the US, where the market for collectibles is more developed than Europe, but growing more slowly.

The US market is expanding by about 5 per cent a year compared to more than 10 per cent a year in Europe.

Corgi's biggest market had been toy cars - in 1986 it sold 5m toy Aston Martin DB5 minatures, based on James Bond's car in the film *Goldfinger*. But it switched its focus to higher-margin collectibles in 1995 after Cinven bought Corgi in a management buy-out from Mattel, the US toymaker.

Cars, trucks and aeroplanes for adult collectors are very intricate and can sell for up to £100, compared with toy vehicles which sell for between £2 and £10.

Operating profits have risen from about £1.3m in 1985 to £3m last year. Turnover, of which 25 per cent is export sales, has increased by about 50 per cent to £18.7m.

The company this year started looking for opportunities to lift sales and began selling into the UK toy market again through Woolworths and other high street retailers.

It has also launched a series of collectible figurines, including the Manchester United football team and characters from the Coronation Street television series, which will be sold through department stores and jewellers.

Vitec plans up to £150m of acquisitions

By Michael Peel

Vitec, the engineer, plans to spend up to £150m on acquisitions to develop its broadcasting equipment and services businesses.

The group, which also makes camera stands, was warned of uncertainties this year connected with economic problems in south-east Asia and the introduction of digital television.

Vitec, which has outperformed the engineering sector by almost 5 per cent since last June, sells items such as microphones and camera batteries to broadcasting production companies.

Malcolm Baggott, chief executive, said the group planned to increase its business with media companies: "I think that's going to be a growing market. There are a hell of a lot of small service companies out there."

But he said it was hard to find good-value acquisitions. Another problem was that many of the companies he was looking at were "people businesses", where acquisitions could be undermined by staff leaving.

Vitec's pre-tax profits last year rose from £27.8m to £38.5m, on sales up 12 per cent to £162.3m.

Shire shrugs off factory disruption

By Virginia Marsh

Shire Pharmaceuticals, the emerging Anglo-American drugs group, shrugged off disruption after an explosion at a key supplier's factory last August to more than triple its 1998 pre-tax profits.

The shares yesterday rose almost 13 per cent, closing 53p higher at 473p after Shire reported better than expected pre-tax profits of £9.1m (£2.41m) on sales of £80.3m (£21.8m).

Rolf Stabel, chief executive, said he expected revenues from the group's lead hyperactivity drugs to continue to grow strongly, following a doubling in their market share in the US to nearly 21 per cent in the year to January.

An explosion at the only plant producing the ingredients for the two drugs had cost Shire about £3m in profits and £15m in lost sales.

Production has since been moved to a Boehringer Ingelheim subsidiary in the US. Mr Stabel said even before the explosion at Arenol, its former supplier, Shire had intended to move to new facilities with more capacity.

He was encouraged that Carbatrol, an epilepsy drug

had claimed more than 10 per cent of the US market for slow-release formulations in its first seven months on sale. The US sales force is to be increased from 90 to 140 partly to support growing use of the drug.

Shire said it was on track with its partner Janssen to file galantamine, its Alzheimer's disease treatment, for approval in Europe this month.

Earnings per share were 4.5p (0.4p losses).

Comment

• Among the gloom of the UK's smaller pharmaceutical and biotech companies, Shire stands out as something of a star. The well-regarded management team acted quickly to stem the damage following the explosion at Arenol while, with the successful launch of Carbatrol, concerns that it was overly dependent on its hyperactivity drugs are easing. Its quiver is filling up nicely with some promising treatments in advanced trials and it has the resources to plug the gaps in its longer-term pipeline.

Despite yesterday's jump, the shares are only back where they were before last summer's problems - they look worth having.

Cortecs settles out of court with former chairman

By Virginia Marsh and Lucy Sny

Cortecs has paid Glen Travers, the biotechnology company's founder and former executive chairman, £1.3m gross plus costs, in an out-of-court agreement to settle his claims of wrongful dismissal.

Mr Travers, a flamboyant Australian entrepreneur, is believed to have claimed a net amount of about £1.5m. He left the group in disputed circumstances last year.

Elements of his remuneration had caused controversy - including a pay package which included business class air tickets to

Australia for his family.

Cortecs - which later last year reported that two of its three lead products were behind schedule - said he had resigned. But Mr Travers maintained the company had issued a statement without his consent saying he was resigning.

Howard Hymanson, of Fox Williams, Mr Travers' solicitors, said yesterday his client had been "vindicated".

Cortecs, which reports its 1998 results next week, said the settlement included payments for salary, pension and other allowances which had been approved by the remuneration committee.

The company also lost its

chief executive and chief operating officer in December after problems emerged with its drug development programmes. Under Phil Gould, the new chief executive and former Glaxo Wellcome executive, and chairman Lord Patten, the former Tory minister, it has embarked on a cost-cutting exercise and made 75 of its 270 staff redundant.

Cortecs appointed independent consultants that said in a preliminary report there were no significant technical problems with Cortecs' main drug trials.

The shares rose 1p to 24.4p, down from 400p in

1996 and 199p early last year.

Cabot in talks to buy Daiwa finance offshoot

By Thorold Barker

Cabot Square Capital, the independent principal finance house, is believed to be in exclusive negotiations to buy the London-based principal finance arm of Daiwa, Japan's second largest bank.

The division was put on the market by Daiwa last month. Cabot is understood to have won an exclusive period to conduct due diligence following the submission of first round bids on February 28.

The assets are understood to be worth about £400m.

including about £280m of debt. The negotiations do not cover the team which manages the portfolio, but it is likely some would be offered positions with the buyer.

Cabot, which has Credit Suisse First Boston as its biggest investor, specialises in asset-backed investments like hotels, pubs and finance companies. Last month it bought Commercial Financial Services, which buys non-performing credit card debt from consumer lenders, for £325m. To Cenix and CVC, two venture capitalists. The deal is expected to be completed by June.

Its portfolio is believed to fit well with Daiwa's busi-

nesses, which includes 700 tenanted units in a vehicle called Aveybury Tavens.

Daiwa is selling the division because it was not prepared to commit the level of capital to be a leading competitor in the London market, where record levels of private equity have been raised in recent years.

The business has been overshadowed by the success of Nomura Principal Finance, which recently sold William Hill, the bookmaker, for £325m, to Cenix and CVC, two venture capitalists. The deal is expected to be completed by June.

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Analysts said they were concerned that the problem revealed a lack of strong financial controls.

Matthew Jordan, analyst at ABN-Amro, the stockbrokers, had been forecasting profits of 28.7m before exceptional costs for 1999.

The discovery caused the company to issue a profits warning yesterday and its shares fell 102p to 600p.

The group said profits in the financial year which ends this month would be £1.1m

lower than market estimates, while a shortfall of £1.2m would hit the first half of the new year.

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Musical warpath

Genuinely deep or
a vehicle for ego?

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Lewis takes on
the heavyweights

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A space oddity

Getting to know
Chanel's 2005 bag

Page XI

Putting freedom to the torch

Has the fourth estate been taking liberties with the public interest, asks John Lloyd

American journalism claims to hold up to the light the inner workings of the world's only superpower. It is thus of vast importance to us all. And it is being convulsed by a debate which is happening, or is about to happen, in every country in the world with a free media.

The debate is about freedom; it is also about whether the media in the US – or anywhere – now really do their traditional duty of holding power to account; it is about what constitutes the public interest. In particular, it is about whether the public interest includes private sleaze.

At its core, there is an image – of a dark blue dress stained with presidential semen, worn and prudently kept uncleansed by Monica Lewinsky. It haunts, not just the debate, but also Joseph Lelyveld, executive editor of the New York Times.

"I often think," he says, "useful in his office, "that the content of politics, religion, education and anything else that comprises public business must change and be recast in terms suitable to television. Television's conversations promote incoherence and triviality; the phrase 'serious television' is a contradiction in terms and TV speaks in only one persistent voice – that of entertainment."

Also at the core of the debate is a fear: the kind of journalism which wins Pulitzer prizes and gets peer group admiration is now under such sustained attack – including from within – that it is not going to survive. A style of instant history which developed in the 19th century and flourished in the 20th may not be serviceable in the 21st.

Earlier this month, in New York's Greenwich Village, a very American event was held. The journalism faculty of New York University had drawn up, with much toil and discussion, a list of the 100 best pieces of journalism this century. Mitchell Stephens, the dean of the faculty, said that "the 20th century was one which understood itself through journalism", and then displayed the best and the brightest of those pieces which – in his and his colleagues' minds – best explained America to Americans.

It was liberal's roll of honour; a tribute to persevere, seal, style, but above all to the itch to know more, to take nothing for granted, to interrogate power. From Ida M. Tarbell's exposures of Rockefeller's piratical Standard Oil Company between 1902 to 1904 to Woodward and Bernstein's uncovering of Watergate in 1972-73, here was a torrent of words which had one overriding justification; this, it was claimed, was "What is Really Happening".

One became aware of the huge volume of sheer fact which had been published in the name of the public interest, of how much of America, or the image Americans (and others) have of America, is contained in that list.

Carl Bernstein turned up to acknowledge that he was still being honoured after all these years. He made a few conventional remarks, then said: "There is not much TV on that list [it was less than

10 per cent]. We have had the greatest communications tool ever for half a century, and we have not used it to anything like its capacity to tell our stories."

Bernstein had worked in TV after leaving the Washington Post, and had put his finger on the sorest point. Of the handful of TV correspondents honoured on the list, most were either dead [Edward Murrow] or veterans [Morley Safer, who had exposed US atrocities in Vietnam in the 1960s].

The people at the event feel bad about TV now; the old anchors, such as Walter Cronkite, have gone, to be replaced with a raucous babble of channels, less foreign news, more talk – or rather sleaze.

Neil Postman, a scholar, and writer on, the media in New York, says in his book

became – would the president have the ability to finish his term of office? He was hanging by a toenail; one more revelation could have done it."

In order to cover the issue, the New York Times had both to report on and find out more about sex, a point where the president lied.

It has, in its opinion page editor Howell Raines, a journalist who has been no less exercised by Clinton's misdeeds over the years of his presidency than the conservatives who have been less exercised by his policies.

"I spent most of my life as an investigative reporter," says Nelson. "I thought it was the greatest thing in the world to be. But we've spent so much time investigating that we have allowed it to go too far. We give no answers."

"Journalists," says Barney Frank, a Massachusetts Congressman, "celebrate failure and ignore success. Nothing about government is done as incompetently as the reporting of it."

This is now a common view. Both Clinton and UK prime minister Tony Blair, or their staffs, have excoriated the negativity of their national media and sought

encouraging the latter to take the former's concerns seriously. The initiative is implicitly based on an apprehension of failure – a failure from excess.

Lelyveld says: "I will be dragged kicking and screaming into following this trend. Above all, I recoil from journalists acting as the moral censors for society."

On the other side, Marvin Olasky, a conservative political scientist and Christian news magazine editor, has just published a book, *The American Leadership Tradition*, which equates good presidency with sexual fidelity.

Conservative politicians have already taken up the challenge implied in this approach: Dan Quayle, the former vice-president under Ronald Reagan who is a possible contender for Republican nomination himself, has pronounced that he has never been unfaithful.

The effect is to give religious sanction to the pursuit of smut – a necessary blemish in a country still as observant of religion as the US.

At the same time, a culture of celebrity and of sexual expression in a country satiated with steadily rising material contentment has produced a steady desertion of the middle classes from public life to private pleasures – so that politics itself, to be comprehended at all, must be wrapped in tinsel and frilly underwear.

"Tis great pity," wrote Voltaire, in his *Letters on England*, "that your nation is overrun with such prodigious numbers of scandals and scurillities! However, one ought to look on them as the bad fruits of a very good tree called liberty."

This is the ultimate argument for journalism which offends elite taste: that in its vulgarity it expresses freedom. The argument now being put is that it has gone so far as to destroy, or at least damage, the tools by which freedom is sustained.

The debate is also about whether the media in the US – or anywhere – now really do their traditional duty of holding power to account

Amusing Ourselves to Death

that "the content of politics, religion, education and anything else that comprises public business must change and be recast in terms suitable to television. Television's conversations promote incoherence and triviality; the phrase 'serious television' is a contradiction in terms and TV speaks in only one persistent voice – that of entertainment."

At the New York Times, Lelyveld says: "TV is so much under pressure to be instant. I watched CNN's coverage of the Starr report; a reporter had grabbed the report, hadn't been given time to read it, and was blurring out raw excerpts live on air, including the sexual details, not believing what she was saying even as she was saying it."

TV is also CNN covering events live hour after hour; it is C-Span, giving gavel-to-gavel coverage of the House and the Senate and the committees; and it is talk and shouts and screams and weeping and laughing from the public, who have been encouraged to splatter their emotions and postures and pain across the screen.

Television has worked in two ways: it has served up events to the people direct and largely unmediated; and it has given the people to the people – or at least a version of them. Interpretation has been squeezed into 30 seconds, or forced to glitz itself up to grab attention from the other 20, or 50, or 100 channels.

Everyone is now in the muck, Lelyveld, asked about the New York Times' coverage of Lewinsky, was at first defensive, citing a 30,000-word series on the economy which had run in late February – at the same time as the front page and much of the rest of the news space was given over to *Watergate*.

"We ignored Clinton's sex life for six years. You can still debate whether or not the law should have permitted an investigation of his sex life – but that ceased to be the issue. The issue

of the TV shout-show culture, is the media's catch-up with the 1980s slogan that "the personal is political".

The most successful political magazine to be launched in the 1980s (1986) was *George*, the brainchild of, and edited by, President Kennedy's son, John F Kennedy Jr. It deliberately mixes sex with celebrity with politics ("20 most fascinating women in politics"; "Top 10 Glamorous White House Weddings").

Kennedy believes that politics cannot be packaged except through glamour and the personal detail; he has more than 400,000 readers to prove him right to his own satisfaction – against fewer than 100,000 for the weekly, long established and prestigious *New Republic*. George – as Maureen Dowd has remarked of it – does not interrogate power; it is complicit with it.

This, according to Harold Evans, is the deepest malaise. Evans was the British editor of the 1970s and 1980s because of his inspired editorship of the Sunday Times – a paper whose investigative reporting largely followed American models. He is now editorial director of the Zuckerman publishing group which includes the New York Daily News, US News and World Report, and The Atlantic.

In his office, perched above the (tabloid) News, Evans says that journalism has been defecting from its main task of calling power to account in favour of revealing scandal.

"*Watergate*," he says, "gave American journalists a halo. People would trust journalists, and honour them. Now, the coverage makes them angry. There was a culture of investigation, but now it's without purpose; in its stead, there is a culture of inquisitiveness."

But it was Evans who once famously told his reporters that they must always ask themselves one question when interviewing a politician: "Why is this bastard lying to me?" It was the logical extension of that aggression, that assumption of bad faith, which underlay the energy put into revelation from the 1970s on, and which underlies it still. It gives a halo, as Evans said, to journalism; it also gave a hatred.

Jack Nelson also won a Pulitzer – in 1980, when he revealed the hideous conditions at a Georgia State mental hospital for the Los Angeles Times. He later became that paper's Washington bureau chief. Now, Nelson heads an initiative called Civic Journalism which arranges debates between citizens and editors.



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BODY AND MIND

THE NATURE OF THINGS

Multiple fathers bring out the best

Clive Cookson finds an indigenous tribal belief that children can have more than one man as their 'Dad' is under siege from the west

Since ancient times, mainstream European and Asian societies have accepted that a child has only one biological father. But until the late 19th century, when biologists proved by microscopic observation that just one sperm and one egg contribute to each baby, this view was little more than folk belief.

Anthropologists are discovering that a significant number of indigenous societies hold an alternative view, known as partible paternity. They believe any man who has sex with the mother just before or during pregnancy contributes biologically to her child.

Stephen Beckerman, anthropology professor at Pennsylvania State University, says we should not feel smug about our wisdom. "It was just a lucky guess that western folk biology was correct."

Partible paternity turns out to be the prevailing view among native peoples in the lowland forests and savannahs of South America. It is also held by some tribes in New Guinea, central Africa and south Asia. In its extreme form the belief holds that multiple fathers are essential for successful reproduction.

William Crocker of the Smithsonian Institution in

Washington, who has studied the Canela people of Brazil, says women "believe it takes numerous ejaculates, inserted into the womb through sexual intercourse, to create a viable foetus in her that will be born alive."

"In addition, they believe that the [child] will grow to express the characteristics of the men who contributed the most semen. Thus a pregnant woman seeks affairs with the men besides her

Extramarital sex is obligatory among the Canela and all babies have recognised 'other fathers'

husband whom she wants her foetus to be like," Crocker says. In other words, extramarital sex is socially obligatory among the Canela and all babies have recognised "other fathers" besides their mother's husband.

The Curripaco of Venezuela, studied by Paul Valentine of the University of East London, are among the tribes that believe in a more moderate form of partible paternity. In their view, pro-

miscuity is not necessary to produce healthy babies, so some children have only one father; but when other men do contribute sperm during pregnancy, their biological role is recognised as "lesser fathers".

The discovery that partible paternity is widespread among stable well-functioning societies has persuaded some anthropologists to reject the conventional theory of the way the human nuclear family evolved. This was supposedly based on a "food for fidelity" bargain: men feed and look after their family, on the understanding that the women bear children for no one else.

Beckerman studied two South American peoples, the Bari and Aché, where some children had a single recognised father and some had more than one. The latter had markedly better survival prospects: 80 per cent of children with secondary fathers lived to the age of 15, compared with 64 per cent of those with one father.

When food is short, sex with multiple partners during pregnancy may help ensure good foetal nutrition because the men bring edible "courting gifts". And while the child is growing up, secondary fathers provide additional food and protection. The evolutionary advantage enjoyed by children with more than one recognised father seems to knock the "food for fidelity" idea on the head, Beckerman says.

Kristen Hawkes of the University of Utah proposes a different view. After studying the Ache in Paraguay and then the Hadza in Tanzania - two remarkably egalitarian societies in which families receive equal shares of meat when men return

from the hunt - she suggests that monogamy and nuclear families evolved as a way to cut the costs of men fighting one another for access to women.

As proto-humans developed weapons, the toll of injuries and deaths would have become unacceptable if men and women had not paired off in acknowledged couples.

The anthropologists say partible paternity appears to reduce sexual jealousy.

When babies are expected to have multiple fathers, adultery does not carry western-style connotations of betrayal. But even among the Canela, where the social culture prohibited any expression of jealousy, Crocker found that some men and women had not pressed feelings of jealousy.

Although partible paternity has been known for 30 years, "it is only in the late 1990s that anthropologists have begun to collect the

data needed to explore its implications for the evolution of our species and for the nature of humanity," Beckerman says. "We should know a good deal more within the next five years."

As the scientific study gets under way, partible paternity itself is disappearing under pressure from western ideals of science, health and morality. Levels of promiscuity that carry little health risk in isolated tribes

become dangerous when contacts with the outside world bring in different sexually transmitted diseases.

Crocker says various factors, ranging from the Brazilian government's "invasive Indian agents" to the arrival of manufactured goods, have already almost destroyed the extensive extramarital sex system of the Canela. It is sad to see another aspect of indigenous culture being destroyed by the western onslaught.



Evolutionary advantage: among the Bari tribe, where a child can have either one or multiple fathers, the chances of survival are increased by the latter

Steve Winter/Survival

Plastic that is not necessarily so fantastic

The results of cosmetic surgery can be dramatic. But, says Victoria Griffith, none of the procedures should be entered into lightly



Jocelyn Wildenstein: two facelifts may help you look younger, five may make you look odd

after a breast enlargement operation. "Most of the time it's how you feel rather than how other people see you that's making the difference," he says. "But that added self-confidence can be powerful."

Yet the rise in popularity of plastic surgery has its dark side. Patients and their doctors are becoming more ambitious in their quest for physical perfection, with sometimes deadly consequences. In March 1997, a 47-year-old woman died at the Irvine Medical Centre in California after an operation to remove fat (liposuction) and a facelift. A judge ruled that the physician had given her too much replacement fluid. Last year, a 51-year-old Florida man died after a penile enlargement and liposuction. An autopsy found complications from the surgery were at least partly to blame.

While deaths are rare - occurring in about one in 100,000 procedures - doctors believe too many patients are unaware of the risks they confront. "Plastic surgery has horrendous pitfalls as well as benefits," says Mark Gorney, executive vice-president for the Doctors Company, which underwrites the risk of medical malpractice, and former president of the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons (tel + 708 228 9800).

Serious medical problems - including infection, allergic reactions, blood clots and heart attacks - may be triggered by surgery. Patients also risk cosmetic mess-ups: a hopelessly out-of-place nose job, a lop-sided liposuction, a too-tight facelift or terrible scarring.

"When I go to the opera, I

look in my glasses at the ladies, and I can tell who's overdone the plastic surgery," says Gorney. "Their faces look hopelessly set, as if they were blocks of ice. They have a look of constant surprise from too many face-lifts."

How do patients avoid becoming a victim of plastic surgery? Doctors suggest:

□ Be realistic. While some people say plastic surgery

changes their lives, a breast enlargement will probably not save a failing marriage, and liposuction is unlikely to turn you into a fashion model. Good cosmetic surgeons know this and try to screen out patients whose dreams are too lofty.

Gorney says he refuses to operate on a quarter of the people who come into his office. A physician's lack of concern for your personal

expectations is a red flag.

"With no in-depth interview about your motives, I'd leave the office," says Jack Brunner, a plastic surgeon in California. "I'd also be very wary of any doctor who says things like: 'I'll make you look beautiful!'"

□ Make sure the physician is qualified. Every country has different standards. In the UK, anyone claiming to be a plastic surgeon must, by law, be trained in cosmetic surgery. That's not the case in the US, where family doctors may try their hand at such procedures with no extra training. Try to find out how long the doctor has been a cosmetic surgeon and how many times he or she has performed a particular procedure. Talking with former patients may help, although it's best to be cautious - even bad plastic surgeons probably have at least a few happy customers.

□ Check malpractice records may be informative, but remember that all plastic surgeons are sued from time to time, particularly in the litigious US. "A lot of plastic surgery patients are not terribly stable emotionally," says Greco. "We try to screen them out, but that's not always possible."

□ Be wary of doctors who are willing to perform many

procedures at once or conduct marathon sessions, particularly if the operation is not being done in a hospital. A nose-job plus a facelift is probably reasonable. Liposuction plus a nose-job and facelift is not. And more than 10 hours of surgery is too much.

"I'm tired after four hours of surgery, and I suspect most physicians are," says Rod Rohrich, chairman of plastic surgery at Southwest Medical Centre in Dallas.

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WEEKEND FT INTERVIEW

A clean, mean, screen machine

Louise Lucas meets a Hong Kong screen god with a sceptical eye on his home base

It sounds an intriguing way to spend a sun-blasted day: locked up in a bathroom with Asia's most combative sex symbol, barely a heart flutter away from his famously taut chest.

But this is Kowloon Tong, a swathe of suburbia in the densely populated peninsula across from Hong Kong island. And Jackie Chan, who has wowed divas and acted alongside Hollywood's finest, is peering down the lavatory and jabbing at the door, translating into English "Jackie Chan's 10 rules of the toilet".

"A clean toilet is very important," enthuses the man billed as the fastest legs in the east, because of the athletic prowess he has displayed in a series of martial arts comedy-thrillers. "My staff know that."

Cleanliness, of course, is next to godliness, and Jackie Chan is a screen god in Hong Kong, Asia and now - after breaking through in Hollywood with *Rush Hour* - the world. He sits at the heart of Hong Kong's movie industry. Indeed, to many, he is the territory's film industry.

But the industry, which is ranked third worldwide in terms of number of films produced after Hollywood and Bombay, is in disarray. Like much else in pre-millennium Hong Kong, it is short of funds, ideas and energy. Buyers are also thin on the ground.

The overseas market is contracting, a process that is compounded by the continuing effects of the Asian financial crisis, while the home market is increasingly turning to foreign products.

Today's audiences, says Chan, will often have a choice at the cinema: a Chinese or American movie. "They automatically go to the American one. Now in Hong Kong, American films are going up and up. Why? Because they are good," he declares.

Last year, for the first time, an American film (*Titanic*) headed the charts in Hong Kong until it was toppled by *Storm Riders*, a wannabe-Hollywood extravaganza of special effects and pretty boys.

"Everything's changing in Hong Kong," says Chan, shaking his Beatle-esque

'A clean toilet is very important,' enthuses the man billed as the fastest legs in the east because of his athletic prowess in films

popular we are not creating any more. Instead, we copy: American, French, Filipino, black and white movies. We just copy because copying is faster.

Year goes by, day by day, time goes by. We don't create people any more; they are all becoming copying machines."

There are those who copy the copies - notably manufacturers of pirate video compact discs, which some blame for the demise of

quick to break up filming and seldom close streets to help crews.

Now, some reckon, triads only appear in front of the camera, in such movies as *Triads in Causeway Bay*.

"*Triads?*" laughs Raymond Chow, chairman of Golden Harvest, producer of Chan's movies. "They are no longer a problem, because there is no more money in the business. It's very simple."

Chan laments the passing of Chinese culture as Hong

Kong becomes a sweeping canvas of sub-American. More sinister threats remain. There are the triads. China's mafias, who have long used the film industry as a way of laundering money and enlarging their criminal gains; and the police, who - at the behest of the government - are

Chan, 48 next month, will survive regardless of government handouts. He reckons he has a few more films in him before retirement. He knows his own limitations, and was perhaps humbled by his earlier failed attempts to break into the US market.

He has also been careful to give much back to the city that catapulted him to stardom. He has promoted blood-giving and condemned drugs. He gives money for philanthropic causes and invests commercially. But at least I can do the best I can, I'll make one action movie a year and see what happens. After that, I'm going back to America to make an American movie."

The government has sought to help the film industry with an HK\$100m (28m) award ("I would not even make half my film; my last one was \$200m," he says, quickly adding that HK\$100m is better than nothing and that Tung Chee-hwa, Hong Kong's chief executive, cares about the industry.)

He sidesteps the issue of whether he will continue to live in Hong Kong (he already spends up to half the year living and working abroad, mainly in the US) by describing his personal utopia: Vancouver's surroundings, Singaporean rule and Japanese manners.

But he adds: "Asia makes me famous. I cannot forget that." And: "I was born in

Hong Kong. Hong Kong makes me famous."

Nonetheless, he shares the concerns of the territory's parents and businessmen who bemoan the lack of space for children to play and the absence of hard punishment which he says makes children prey to drug-trafficking.

While businessmen claim that vocal politicians are stifling the smooth course of commerce, Chan takes exception to the swathes of protesters that sweep through the streets every week, complaining about everything from falling home prices to collapsed

paper recycling companies. The fault, as he sees it, is a government too eager to show the world that Hong Kong under China is every bit as free as it was before sovereignty reverted to Beijing, if not more so.

"They want to prove it but they're wrong to do that," Chan says. "There are more strikes and protests now than before the turnover. They are wrong. These things kill the country."

Chan's future may entail setting up schools to train film actors and film industry technical staff - but there is also the growing Chan empire, with its chain

of restaurants that will provide work for his support crew when they like him must be pensioned off.

In the meantime, he has taken to the restaurant trade with supreme ease. He is a partner in Planet Hollywood, which has an outlet in Hong Kong, and, fresh from the success of *Rush Hour*, he hopes next to take his sushi restaurant chain to the US.

"Twenty years ago we didn't have money to eat in restaurants selling Japanese food. Now, with my restaurant, I can give discounts now to all my friends. And I go to different restaurants to check the toilets are clean."

PERSPECTIVES



Jackie Chan: 'Now everything is human rights. You cannot hit children any more. If you hit them, they see you. There's too much freedom'

David Paul Morris

HOME TRUTHS

Switched on to Mac's fatal addiction

Sceptical at the beginning, Walter Ellis soon became a convert in a complex and continuing affair with his computer

When the late Robert Maxwell invited me to join his prototype European newspaper, promising that if I did not "rob him blind" I would enjoy a rewarding executive career, I had no idea what I was letting myself in for.

Specifically, I did not realise that it marked the beginning of a lifelong affair with Apple Macintosh computers.

The fact that the bogus billionaire sacked me three months after my arrival to make way for his latest protégé will come as no surprise. He paid only two-thirds of my due compensation and died soon afterwards.

Much more significant - to me at any rate - is the fact that by then I had become addicted to Mac technology.

Maxwell was in some ways a genuine visionary, and he had been persuaded early on in his newspaper career that Mac computers were the way forward. I was sceptical on day one, thoroughly convinced by the end of the first week.

Thus, when the great man reluctantly let me go and I was launched into my glittering freelance career, I knew what I had to do.

In 1991, most Macs were sold through Apple centres - quaint emporia in which one could view and try out the product - and it was in one such, near Waterloo Station,

that I made my first purchase. It was an Apple Classic, square and compact, with a built-in screen - so small and unprepossessing that, had it not been encased in grey plastic, it might have been mistaken for one of Logie Baird's inventions.

Today, it seems almost laughably slow and forgetful; then it was at the cutting edge of information technology.

I wrote a thousand articles on it and put together my first book. When I moved on, five years later, to my present model, a Performa 6320, it was with a mixture of regret and anticipation.

This is where the mood alters. It is not that my Performa does not function. It does. But, over the years, I have had to beat it ruthlessly into submission. Today, I regard it as at least as much a product of my will as of Apple's genius.

It is full of software that I have bent and trimmed and reconfigured so that it works better than it has any right to. What it lacks - what the salesmen were careful to avoid disclosing - is any significant upgrade capacity. Had it not been for my software fascism, it would by now be fit company only for Babbage's "difference engine", though somewhat less flexible and up-to-date.

But I am now so thoroughly attuned to the Mac way of doing things that I am unable, or

unwilling, to change. Last year, I bought a Mac laptop, its CD-Rom drive didn't work and it took ages for MacWarehouse, my distance supplier, to go the extra mile and replace it.

Its battery runs down in little more than an hour; the so-called active matrix screen is not what it was cracked up to be; its card modem is slow and unreliable.

So why do I stay on like this? Why, indeed, am I considering an iMac (available in five flavours) for our house in France? And why has my wife, a graphics designer, recently taken delivery of an expensive G3 desktop model so hastily thrown together that its high-speed internal modem, considered integral to the system, does not even exist yet?

Good questions. Inertia must be part of the answer, but there is also the nagging belief that PCs are worse. PC friends complain of the fundamental problems they face, and Windows 98 is seen as no more than an echo of the Mac operating system.

The fact is that, so long as you are not a games fanatic, Macs spoil you for the rest.

So I am going to buy an iMac. Whether I'll opt for tangerine or blueberry, I don't know.

My wife's G3, meanwhile, squats in her studio, like an alien in status, waiting to be activated by the

prophesied arrival of its modem. By the spring, we will own six of the beasts, including an original Neolithic Performa that still works although it cannot cope with the newer generations of software.

Addiction is not too strong a word for it. Sometimes, when I should be getting on with other things, I find myself running a diagnostic on my system, optimising my hard disc or spring-cleaning my applications in search of duplicates or "orphans". When a fellow sufferer called me round the other morning to give him a second opinion, we agreed that we didn't know what we were talking about but were somehow compelled to go on.

I can't help it. A while back, I bought Encyclopaedia Britannica on CD-Rom, but couldn't load it because of a conflict between something on the disc and an unknown number of extensions in my system folder. I called Britannica's helpline in Oregon to be told that it was all a mystery. Loading the world's most reputable encyclopaedia on to a Mac required the patience of Job and the intuition of a shaman.

But I managed it in the end. I did not give up - and today it works like a dream.

It's all Maxwell's fault, of course. Life for me could have been so much simpler if he hadn't left me in thrall to the Mac pack. But it would have been so much harder, too.

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THE LEADING HOTELS OF THE WORLD

BOOKS

Facts are a feminist issue

Women's Lib is 30 years old. Its reassessment is certainly overdue, writes Sheila Rowbotham

THE WHOLE WOMAN

by Germaine Greer
Doubleday £16.99, 352 pages

When fire flared up in Germaine Greer's belly against a mambypamby type of writing about feminism going too far, she penned *The Whole Woman*. It is written in full voice and replete with arresting and curious facts, ranging from anthropoids' burns turning scarlet to the opposite sex to women constituting 51 per cent of the US military.

Ever since *The Female Eunuch* came blasting off the press, Greer has been amazing the English by her refusal to bow to the polite consensus. By continuing to be rude, outrageous and intelligently batty, the original "bad girl" feminist has turned herself into a kind of anti-pundit inhabiting a unique niche in the liberal media. In *The Whole Woman*, however, she changes tack. Exasperated by women journalists who insist women have little to moan about, who extol glamour or enthuse about laddishness, Greer waves the entirely unashamed flag of the early 1970s

Women's Liberation Movement. This radical and utopian moment in feminism has been buried as "earnest", ridiculed as hysterical and distorted as obsessed with "equality". Its rehabilitation and reassessment are certainly overdue. So it seems somewhat churlish to quibble.

But the snag is - and the snag always was - that Greer never did bother about women's liberation groups and meetings. No stamp-lecker or paper-seller, she was a debater and witty communicator in the media. Valuable as this is, it means you miss out on things, and thus Greer sees the Women's Liberation Movement as about self-definition. This was only one aspect; it was also about learning through acting collectively and it connected to a wider radical politics.

Her assumption that feminism is about taking stances affects the politics of the book. In contrast to her adversarial position towards married women, early Women's Liberation Movement politics in Britain sought to overcome the divisions which kept women suspicious and competitive of one another. While Greer was writing articles like "The Slag Heap Erupts" in



Germaine Greer: 'The Whole Woman' wallops us with a series of assertions which are both imprecise and polarised

the underground paper, Oz, we were plodding round Church groups and the Housewives' Register. When she was declaring to the press that emancipation was about not wearing knickers, we were the ones explaining to miners at their Skegness conference that we were not "knicker knockers".

Another consequence still evident three decades on is Greer's tendency to present what is said in the media as evidence of what is actually thought. Fourteen-year-old girls who read Bliss don't take all of it as gospel, any more than I did when I read True Romances. The message is not always the same as reality.

On the other hand, *The Whole*

Woman certainly engages with the new dilemmas facing feminism: it also contains plenty of sensible opinions about breast implants and advice against trying to be a size eight. Moreover, some of Greer's warrior-women are well directed at those who blame single mothers for the ills of capitalism or express a chirrupy faith in shopping as inherently liberatory. Not, she tells us, if you are shopping for six in Stockport on a low income.

Her strength is her sharp eye

and her humour. Blair's parrainage is compared to a Butlins holiday camp because of all the women in their "little red suits". Thoughtful observations surface as she notes female friendship in

soaps, or writes: "To deny a woman's sexuality is certainly to oppress her but to portray her as nothing but a sexual being is equally to oppress her."

By and large, however, *The Whole Woman* wallops you with a series of assertions which are both imprecise and polarised. Hundreds of woman-hours are being spent waxing legs and bleaching moustaches, fulminates Greer, without troubling to distinguish whether this is a problem to the economy or to individuals. Yet "Women are worker bees; males are drones." Which women? Which men? Does this include the waxers and bleachers?

This way of writing makes it

difficult to consider her ideas and turn the thoughts around, encouraging loyal devotion rather than critical contemplation. By pushing each position to its extreme Greer presents her case in absolute terms. When the reader's actual experience conflicts with her statements, the approach increases the likelihood of opposition becoming total. Why believe any of it when so much does not ring real? The assertive rhetoric also slithers between different contexts without any qualification or reference to factors outside the thesis that men are bad to women: US private health care and the NHS are simply bundled together, for example.

Early this century Rebecca West, then a socialist and feminist, characterised the kind of feminism which focused on men as the sole problem as "so-simple" feminism. It is easy to trounce a single enemy, a specific baddy, but it is always misleading.

In the *The Whole Woman* there are no shades in the spectrum, only opposing polarities. This is a world in which there is no such thing as contradictory implications and meanings. Medicine only controls; technology simply degrades and deskills. In fact, new technology has had a differing impact upon various groups of women in poor countries, causing unemployment along with new employment opportunities.

Greer is doing something which was pioneered in the American best-selling social-issue books of the late 1950s, and pulled off well by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* back in the early 1960s. You take a set of attitudes already present in popular culture and you give them a new twist. But you don't take on

complexity and you fit material into the case you want to make, rather than examining conflicting evidence or implications.

Ironically, Greer the iconoclast eliminates the possibility of human beings acting upon their circumstances. The NHS and trade unions, for instance are both simply dismissed as male dominated: yet both have been sites for considerable efforts for change by women, and some men, and these have had a significant impact - though rarely celebrated in the media.

The troubling result is that

Greer may have moved from wild woman to moral improver, but she has retained the assumption that feminism is about self-assertion

other women come over as terrible fools and dupes, while the author of *The Whole Woman* looms over the rest of us like a modern version of the early 19th-century evangelical Hannah More. Greer might have moved from wild woman to moral improver over the last three decades, but she has retained the assumption that feminism is primarily a matter of self-assertion and declaration. In fact it has historically been about very much more - including wider questions of social inequality between women of various classes and races and the nuances of personal gender power which fascinate many young feminists today.

Risen apes, fallen angels

And that's just the biologists and philosophers, writes Jon Turney as the evolutionary debate continues

DARWIN WARS: How Stupid Genes Became Selfish Genes

by Andrew Brown
Simon & Schuster £12.99, 241 pages

Charles Darwin taught us that we were risen apes, not fallen angels. Ever since, we have been arguing about how far we have risen. Currently fashionable evolutionary psychology suggests that the answer is: not very far. Our genes, selfish to the last piece of DNA, are the same as those of the hunter-gatherers of 100,000 years ago. No wonder we find modern life a bind.

Because Darwinism claims to fix our place in nature, academic arguments about the fine points of Darwinian doctrine attract wider notice. Recently, the rest of us have taken more notice because Darwinian disputes have been fought out by some enviably gifted popular writers who mostly seem to detest one another. Such authors as biologists Steven Jay Gould and Richard Dawkins and philosopher Daniel Dennett delight in denouncing one another's ideas as worthless or misconceived.

Like all the best academic disputes, the protagonists agree about most things. They all believe that evolution is real, that the theory of natural selection is the best way to explain it, and that creationists and other anti-Darwinists are completely wrong-headed. But their views of the ultimate implications of natural selection differ radically.

Andrew Brown, an avowed atheist and lapsed religious affairs correspondent, offers a

guide to these new disputes, with their sacred texts, sectarian heat and disconcerting combination of high seriousness and downright silliness. The trick is to tell the last two apart, all the trickier because there are several different disagreements to disentangle.

Some have their roots in technical matters. Do new species appear in the fossil record at a uniform rate or do we see long stasis followed by big changes, as Gould and his collaborator Niles Eldredge suggested in the 1970s? Are all the features of modern organisms Darwinian adaptations, or are

Brown suggests that the 1990s version of these ideas, under the banner of evolutionary psychology, has taken many of the criticisms on board. He also suggests that Gould gets no credit for this from his opponents, which is not quite true. True, Daniel Dennett devotes a whole chapter of his relentlessly combative *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* to beating up on Gould's attributes to Gould, who retorted that Dennett was "Dawkins' lapdog". But in a later, calmer moment, even Dennett concedes that Gould was largely right about the flaws in early sociobiologists' reasoning

evolution of proto-humans is a digression, and like most of the British, she gets interviewed. Brown gets a lot out of his conversations with Dawkins, John Maynard Smith and co. But the Americans are merely quoted from books: maybe his publishers were too mean to send him across the Atlantic to meet Gould, Wilson, or Dennett.

Less forgivably, opening the book at the deathbed of the unfortunate George Price seems a cheap way of dramatising the issues. Price, who refined the mathematics which shows that self-sacrifice translates into

genetic self-interest, got religion and finally committed suicide, but it is clear that Price had a personality disorder long before his disconcerting discovery. The fact that he reacted so sadly to a world of evolutionary selfishness makes the stakes seem higher than they are. At the fag end of the 20th century, anyone can find deeper reasons to despair about the perfectibility of human beings than the fact that altruism obeys an algebraic law.

Brown is also unconvincing when, having accused all and sundry of bad philosophy, he concludes that we have a choice between regarding the universe as fundamentally benevolent or radically malign. Like Pascal's wager, this presents a false choice; it may merely be utterly indifferent. Here, I think, is another point, albeit a non-scientific one, on which Dawkins and Gould would agree.

Still, this book is an entertaining sampler of one of the great scientific disputes of the day. As Brown says, scientists spread their beliefs by means other than copulation, and defeat their enemies without killing them. On the evidence here, this is just as well.

adaptationist tales merely modern *Just So stories*? Other differences are more philosophical. Is contingency or necessity the best way to read the overall pattern of evolution? But the key divide is over the ideas of inclusive fitness and gene selection developed since the 1960s by William Hamilton and popularised so dazzlingly by Dawkins. Above all, it is over the relevance of selfish genes to social behaviour. This is where Gould and his long-time ally population geneticist Richard Lewontin get most annoyed with what Gould has dubbed ultra-Darwinism.

Here, Brown could delve a little deeper into the history, but he does chart the early claims about human sociobiology 20 years ago by the great student of social insects Ed Wilson, and their harsh criticism by Gouldians.

when they described apparent universals of human behaviour in adaptive terms.

Gould is equally scornful of evolutionary psychology, which Brown has more time for, and in general he is a more amiable commentator on the issues than any of the writers he so gleefully quotes.

That said, the book has its weaknesses. It is a pity to neglect the arguments of those biologists like the Anglo-American duo Brian Goodwin and Stuart Kauffman, who believe that natural selection operates under constraints which help shape living forms. Dawkinsians and Gouldians both think they are wrong, but their ideas are at least worth considering.

There's also a slightly parochial feel about the proceedings. A chapter on Elaine Morgan's ideas about aquatic

Dahl too sounded a cautionary note. For him, as for the priest, "tender gluttony" is sin. Harris is wise to these risks - Vianne's first, most glorious window display is that most terrifying figment of fairytale, a gingerbread house - but her novel is unequivocal in its enthusiasm for chocolate, as am I, for her book.

Susanna Rustin

in whom both first- and third-person narration are variously entangled. Not quite episodic, the stories nonetheless assume a loosely chronological order: later, London-based narratives are spun from the irksome responsibilities of adulthood, the daily pressures of work and family.

This interplay between stories adds flesh to the slender nature of their individual subject matters. Associations are formed: between the provincial boy and the metropolitan man; between the fatherless children of earlier stories and the young fathers of later ones.

Foster's message, at its least profound, can be distilled to the succinct, if hackneyed, observation voiced by the flash salesmen of "Stepping Stones": "Boys never grow up." This clumsiness of tone tends to infect the few stories that deal directly with adult matters: after the understatement of earlier stories, the overt symbolism of "Ice-Cubes" and "Off the Plot" resonates too jarrially.

It is as if the complexities of maturity that so plague Foster's characters take a similar toll on his writing.

His abilities, however, are displayed more toadstool effect in "Big Wheel", "Life on Earth", "Fall" and "Stitches", which expertly recreate the rhythms and cadences of young lives, while the title story wistfully evokes the gradual loss of youth without recourse to obvious nostalgia. At his best Foster can write with economy and verve, establishing a verbal beat as dynamic as the pop songs that stud his tales.

This is undoubtedly a slight collection,

but when Foster's controlled, impressionistic prose takes flight his subject matter stretches towards a more rewarding realisation: that of the ways in which boys live on in the men they become.

Ludovic Hunter-Tilney

Brave and stupid

Crime Wave by James Ellroy (Century £15.99, 288 pages) comes billed as "reportage and fiction from the underside of L.A." The City of Angels boasts the world's darkest, most elaborately concealed underbelly, and James Ellroy is the Dante of urban noir.

His novels carry his monomaniacal world view along in a torrent of high-voltage prose, but in shorter form, his strengths can become weaknesses. In these pieces, all written for GQ, he seems trapped between style and substance like his own noirish characters.

My Dark Places, about his investigation into his mother's murder, was a tour de force. Having written her benediction, Ellroy's return to police procedure seems almost mundane, recapturing the style of 1950s true crime magazines.

The murder of Karen Kupcinet, the daughter of a Chicago columnist and talk-show host, cries out to be

fictionalised: sheer wanna-be actress life of diet pills and plastic surgery is the stuff of Ellroy nightmares. Protagonists in Ellroy's corrupt world usually run out of control and meet violent ends. Not justice, just exhaustion.

Two of the three stories feature Danny Getchell, sleazy editor of Bush Bush, the character portrayed by Danny DeVito in the movie of *LA Confidential*. Getchell narrates in bravura bursts of bold alliteration. It's fun: who else would describe Frank Sinatra as "a macho-maimed mama's boy and pussy-whipped putz"?

The third story brings back Dick Contino, the accordion star who went from Ellroy idol to Ellroy character. It moves, unilaterally, with its own frantic energy, setting up "Dragnet's" Jack Webb in the ultimate LA conspiracy, TV as mind-control, before exploding like a balloon jetting around the room as the air escapes.

When *Crime Wave* moves into the reality of LA, Ellroy is most successful, whether it is his junior high reunion or his take on OJ Simpson. In eight pages, Ellroy instinctively sizes up OJ in a way most commentators couldn't see. Simpson's money and lawyers meant he couldn't play out his string like the Ellroy character he should be. "He didn't have the soul or the balls." A femme fatale tells Dick Contino, "he's brave and stupid. I like guys like that." Ellroy is a guy like that, and it makes his writing memorable.

Michael Carlson

FICTION IN BRIEF

Bitter-sweet seduction

When a new customer enters her shop, chocolatiere Vianne Rocher instantly divides their favourites among her fabulously decorated sweets. Like Vianne's hazelnut clusters, chocolate seashells, candied rose-petals and "Venus's nipples". Joanne Harris's third novel, *Chocolate* (£12.99, 324 pages) is beautifully wrapped, and its publication coincides with the weeks before Easter when the story takes place.

Set in a French village of "two hundred souls at most", the plot describes the battle for these souls which rages for the duration of Lent. Vianne is a stranger, who blows in on the wind of the carnival with her six-year-old daughter Anouk, and sets up home and business opposite the church. Père Reynaud is the local priest whose wrath she evokes. As their mutual enmity grows, the villagers divide - Vianne attracting

Boys forever

Wordsworth's phrase, that "the Child is father of the Man", hangs heavily over *It Cracks Like Breaking Skin* (Faber £9.99, 158 pages), Stephen Foster's collection of stories that revolve around childhood events and their reverberations through adult life. It is a self-conscious debut, marked by an insistent awareness of beginnings. Most of the stories tell of growing up in the English Midlands, and hinge upon events of seeming mundanity: a boy visits a fair, daughters cook for their mother, friends bicycle into the country. The stories are compact and their significance elusive. The endings defy easy resolution, as does the writing, which switches abruptly between the lyrical and the conversational.

As the collection progresses, seepage between stories becomes increasingly apparent. Names recur and a central protagonist emerges: Hewitt, a figure



Juliet Gardiner's 'From the Bomb to the Beatles' (Collins & Brown £19.99, 160 pages) teams up with an Imperial War Museum exhibition (from March 25) on 'The Changing Face of Post-war Britain': a fascinating record of the era's social propaganda. This image - from 'the atomic age' - was to encourage women to resume their place as homemakers and leave the jobs to the men. 'Lucky the mother whose table is Formica-topped' ran one slogan.

ARTS

Scales of emotion

From Wunderkind to Wonderwoman without missing a beat: Andrew Clark profiles the violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter

The music world has taken note: Anne-Sophie Mutter is playing with a greater sense of emotional engagement and musical freedom. It all happened rather suddenly, within months of the death of her husband, Detlef Wunderlich, in 1995. She played Brahms's Violin Concerto with Kurt Masur and the New York Philharmonic, and took it on tour to Europe. When their live recording was released, it bore a dedication to Wunderlich, the only public reference Mutter had made to him since his death from cancer.

The change in Mutter's interpretations raises a number of important questions: is it germane to the works she is playing or is it superimposed for effect?

The performance was worlds apart from the fluent classical approach of her youth. It was an unremittingly emotional statement, with frequent use of portamenti and countless instances of lingering across the bar-line. Mutter's provocative sense of phrasing brought out a yearning quality in the music - rapt, intimate, soulful. Not everyone liked it, but most were willing to be wowed, especially when they discovered the private subtlety.

Zoom forward two years, to New York last month. Mutter, 35, is on the emotional warpath again, this time with the Beethoven concerto - another work she studied and recorded as a teenager with Herbert von Karajan. What impressed her Carnegie Hall audience was the same unashamed lingering, the slowing-down and speeding-up, the sense of an imagined conversation, of self-communing, of pleading and comforting. It will be on show again at the Barbican on Monday when she plays Beethoven with the London Symphony Orchestra.

The change in Mutter's interpretations raises a number of important questions. Is her new approach ger-

mane to the works she is playing, or is it superimposed for effect? Has her interpretation genuinely deepened, or is she using expressive freedom as a vehicle for her own ego?

There is no doubt that Mutter is the goddess of the classical music business. Like a handful of other musicians - Rattle, Hampson, von Otter, Kleiber - she dictates her own terms. She has reached her prime, because she is immensely experienced while still relatively young. "She's a very passionate performer, but she tempers her passion with supreme elegance," says Deborah Borda, executive director of the New York Philharmonic. "When Anne-Sophie is doing Brahms or Beethoven, you're looking at a level of excellence that is rarely paralleled."

Born in 1963 at Rheinfelden in Germany's Black Forest, Mutter began studying violin at the age of five, and a year later won first prize in a national music competition. Her recital at the 1978 Lucerne festival brought her to the attention of Karajan. From the age of 13 she appeared regularly with him in Salzburg and Berlin, and recorded most of the core repertoire.

In the late 1980s she made an unexpected turn into the contemporary field, winning plaudits for her inquiring mind and breadth of command. She spent 1998 playing nothing but Beethoven's 10 violin sonatas, part of a move back to the Classical-Romantic repertoire.

Somewhere along the line, most prodigies would have crumbled under the pressure of expectation. Menuhin did at one point, others simply disappeared. But Mutter has transformed herself from Wunderkind to Wonderwoman without missing a beat. One of the reasons is that she was never overpushed as a teenager. And she has Karajan to thank for helping her to achieve and maintain her pre-eminence.

It was an incalculable advantage to learn the great concerto repertoire with a conductor who was steeped in the traditions of the past. It gave her a unique musical foundation, and enhanced her natural confidence. She claims not to suffer nerves, and there is no reason to doubt her. Something in her genes or upbringing has given her an iron discipline, capable of with-

standing the pressure of living up to her past, not to mention motherhood (she has two children) and being widowed so early.

Throughout her career she has been adopted by father figures: Paul Sacher, who persuaded her to take up contemporary music; Mstislav Rostropovich, with whom she forged a strong emotional bond; and her husband, Karajan's lawyer, who was much older than she. They gave her the security she needed.



Karajan remains her spiritual father. Following his example, she demands the highest fees - as much as £35,000 per performance - and shows a determination to control all aspects of her working environment. She can be charming, but in the best prima donna tradition she can also be aggressive. "She's convinced of her own greatness," says one of Europe's leading orchestra directors. "It's a very smooth, inaccessible surface, as if she doesn't want to be human."

Nonetheless she realises the importance of marketing. Look at the publicity shots, the strapless gowns, the seductive way she walks on stage: she's more like a model than a violinist. She exploits this glamorous image with the flair of a tycoon.

Fortunately, her music-making is more true-to-life. Although critics cite an aloof, monolithic quality which tends to amaze rather than move, no one questions her musical sophistication or unbelievable control. Mutter's is not the kind of technique that exists to be admired; it is totally at the service of the music. In that respect she represents the old central European style - as opposed to the flash, brash school nurtured at the Juilliard. The sound is darker, more sumptuous than any of her Russian or American contemporaries, and Mutter is Number One in tonal projection. She has that rare combination of strong tone and soaring resonance, ideal for retaining a beautiful sound when produced over massive orchestration.

She may lack the humour of a Perlmutter or the playfulness for Tchaikovsky and the French repertoire, but she has a unique distinction among her contemporaries in being a champion of the new. Thanks to her collaboration with Penderecki, Lutoslawski and Rihm, all of whom wrote works for her, she has mastered the techniques required for late 20th century music - the unusual scales, intervals and combinations of double-stop passages which are not required for Romantic music.

In a New York residency next season she will play everything from Berg to Bernstein, and introduce the solo sonata Penderecki has written for her. Concert promoters know that, such is the trust Mutter has built with her public, people will turn out whatever she is playing.

Ultimately, however, violinists stake their reputation on the 19th century repertoire. On that score, it's still too early to place Mutter in the pantheon of all-time greats. When she plays with a senior conductor like Masur, who understands the introspective qualities of the music, there is a counterweight to the expressive freedom she now favours. But with her long-time accompanist Lambert Orkis, who tends to play a submissive role in the musical partnership, Mutter's emotional engagement sounds sentimental, mannered, as if she is digging around for effects.

Reviewing her recent Beethoven sonata recordings, Gramophone magazine said there were "so many hold-ups, tempo changes and hesitations that [one] longed for a simpler style. The effectiveness of such licences decreases with the amount of distortion they cause".

Such comments suggest that Mutter's new-found freedom is imposed from without, rather than true to the source of musical expression. It's not superficial - it's too strong and solid for that - but neither is it deep. It's as if she is using the music to impress people with her playing. Could it be that her ego lies in the path of her greatness?

RADIO MARTIN HOYLE

Brave new shallowness

"A gecko fell off the ceiling into my soup," Simon Calder's walk from Colombia to Panama chronicled in Saturday's *Bridging the Gap* is full of slightly surreal apertures: the matriarchal society where a girl's arrival at puberty is greeted with three-day parties, the alleged resemblance of some Indian songs to the metrical psalms of early Scots settlers.

Calder is good at conveying the plodding ordeal of trudging eight hours at a time through searing heat, worried sick about the water supply. And yet... There is something of the anomalous about him, a toneless drone that deprives his perfectly interesting talk of any excitement. If his radio pieces are still identical with his independent articles it is almost better to read him than to listen.

On Saturday morning the trick is scooping the evening's television. Radio 4's *From Our Own Correspondent*

often pre-empts BBC2's *Correspondent*, since the BBC believes (erroneously) that aural and visual media are the same and can therefore employ the same people to cover the same items. Short-changing again.

On 'Woman's Hour', the former intern cast a new light on the soigné grooming of the Washington set

especially as the corporation plays its trump card - Gerald Keane - mercilessly. This correspondent reminds me increasingly of the critic Kenneth Tynan's description of the writer Arthur Quiller-Couch as "the moist-eyed cub of English letters". Keane is the moist-eyed, sometimes lump-throated,

voice of humanity in current affairs, and to be honest I sometimes wish he had the briskness of his colleague Sue Lloyd Roberts.

Yes, radio makes specific demands, as we listeners are almost tired of reminding the broadcasters. *Descendants* illustrates this. Radio 4's potentially intriguing series of family detective work started with an Englishman's search for a cousin in South America, the result of a liaison between his dashing, Clark Gable-like railway-building grandfather and a native woman.

The second story, last Saturday, dealt with a journalist's search for Japanese relatives descended from his own ancestor, Lafcadio Hearn. This one-eyed Anglo-Irish-Greek, toughened by American street life, is best known to film-buffs for the Japanese movies based on his haunting ghost stories. An even more fascinating programme: but it helped

that the narrator works for *The Economist*, knows how to communicate, and can buttonhole an audience, while the first presenter was easily worthy.

Worthiness is a moot point. Radio 3's *Between the Ears* never justified the choice of the tenor Mario Lanza for a faintly irritating "experiment in creative radio". To blame the mediocre subject if the treatment failed? To shoot a sitting duck? Would one really lavish experimental techniques and a Radio 3 slot on mediocrities in other forms? The producer declared he didn't want to do the "obvious": the Kennedys or Marilyn Monroe. Sometimes the obvious are infinitely more worthwhile. Next, a Liberace theme evening?

The new shallowness, the historical and cultural illiteracy of our brave new spiritual suburbia, was perfectly captured by *The Sunday Evening Post's* mock colour-suppl values, with millennial lists of "the best bands of the last thousand years" and "the best films of the past thousand years". Jeremy Paxman in *Start the Week* expressed surprise at Britain's 19th-century reputation for liberalism, this apparently being an unfashionable attribute of what he terms "this funny old country" (can the iconoclasts be turning into Mr Kipling - the cake man, that is, not the writer?). Of genuine interest was the chilling news that Chinese versions of English schoolbooks illustrate John playing cricket and squash with a boy crushing insects under his heel. And Theodore Herzl, founding father of Zionism, recommended Zionists to play cricket.

Gastronomic notes: in *A Stitch in Time*, devoted to Honiton lace, Kaffe Fassett admired some lace made out of cooked spaghetti. In *Guernsey's Question Time* one of the experts tasted on air what turned out to be the "salty and gelatinous" eggs of slugs and snails. And in Monica Lewinsky's much-hyped *Woman's Hour* interview, the former intern cast a new light on the soigné grooming of the Washington set when asked by Jenni Murray about that "kind of yukky" dress. Monica brightly riposted she hadn't noticed. "I wore it out to dinner that night."

In this new series he brings several strands of his stories up to date, starting today with the surprisingly encouraging fate of the last 79 members of the Panara tribe who, a quarter of a century ago, he filmed as they were flown out to an Indian reserve, appearing to be well on the way to extinction. Next week he returns to the story of a settler's boy, kidnapped by Indians when he was six years old, whose family have searched for him ever since. Cowell caps this story with a startling discovery, adding another upbeat note to what had seemed previously to be

There is a temptation for a critic covering a lot of material to discover common ground among his subjects, however contrived it may be. Jackson Pollock, the residue of *Rain* and *Boyzone*? They are all about drips. You grow wary of falling victim to the tortuous connection, so can it be safe to suggest that there is a common theme to three documentary series which begin this weekend?

Yes, it can. In *The Last Of The Hiding Tribes* (Channel 4 today, 3.00 pm), the opening programme in *The Establishment* (tomorrow, Channel 4, 7.30 pm) and *Rebellion!* (tomorrow, BBC2, 8.00 pm) very different programme makers use highly contrasting styles. Yet in the end each is either centrally concerned with, or inspired by, tribal identity and its connection to land ownership.

Adrian Cowell who has made the three-part series *The Last Of The Hiding Tribes* has almost certainly done more to publicise the destruction of the Amazon forest than anyone else on the planet. In the late 1990s he set off through the jungle to look for the Krein-Akrore tribe and, although he failed to film them, the ITV programme that he made recording that failure - *The Tribe That Hides From Man* - was a huge success and became a television landmark. It showed the efforts of the explorers from Brazil's Indian Protection Service to save the tribe from the depredations of modern civilisation. Then in 1994 Cowell brought us *Decade Of Destruction*, with its pictures of roads being driven into the rain forest and the slash-and-burn techniques of new settlers.

In this new series he brings several strands of his stories up to date, starting today with the surprisingly encouraging fate of the last 79 members of the Panara tribe who, a quarter of a century ago, he filmed as they were flown out to an Indian reserve, appearing to be well on the way to extinction. Next week he returns to the story of a settler's boy, kidnapped by Indians when he was six years old, whose family have searched for him ever since. Cowell caps this story with a startling discovery, adding another upbeat note to what had seemed previously to be

TELEVISION CHRISTOPHER DUNKLEY

Tribal identity and its relation to territory

an Amazon chorus of unbroken sadness.

It may seem far-fetched to suggest that there is common ground between the Panara tribe and Gerald Cavendish Grosvenor, Duke of Westminster, whose various names are not by chance those of some of the most valuable tracts of land in London. Yet watching *The Establishment* soon after seeing Cowell's programme, it is impossible not to wonder about the connections. When other people wanted land in the rain forest, the Panara found their entitlement to their ancestral areas ignored or taken away from them. When leaseholders wanted to own properties in Mayfair and Belgravia the Grosvenors could only watch while the Thatcher government legislated to make their freeholds available to the leaseholders.

True, it is hard, not to say impossible, to feel for the monstrously over-privileged duke as for the Panara Indians, yet the indignation felt by each at old rights being handed over to others is shared by both Indians and the Duke at old rights being handed over to others does have similarities

Interviews with former Rhodesian prime minister Ian Smith, and the recollections of secretaries, diplomats, and people such as Robert Mugabe and Kenneth Kaunda who were involved in the early days of Rhodesia's black political parties.

As so often with such series, the greatest fascination is in the frankness which comes with the passage of time: the revelation of Rab Butler's refusal to commit to paper what Smith perceived as a nod and a wink agreeing to independence; Wilson's fury at the failure of the white Rhodesian politicians to provide food for the black leaders, and so on. Though the significance of tribal identity could hardly be clearer, land ownership is a less explicit topic in this series than in the other two.

Yet recent events in Zimbabwe leave no room for doubt that that is just what UDI was about.

film from the time are interspersed with new interviews with the key people involved.

So here Harold Wilson's

televised talks to the nation,

given in a tone that now

sounds peculiarly

patronising, are used alongside Dimbleby's new

interviews with former

Rhodesian prime minister

Ian Smith, and the

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The saying goes, "If you remember the Sixties you never experienced them." But it was late in the decade that everyone started crashing out on drugs and free love. In 1968 the flavour, even before JFK's assassination, was Hi-Fi Paranoia. The Cold War was rampant; the west had just survived the Cuban crisis; and anything to do with spies, secrets or nuclear showdowns was big box office. The James Bond series, launched with *Dr No*, was about to go iconic with *Goldfinger*. And *Dr Strangelove* appeared, perhaps the greatest comic nightmare of its (or any other) time.

One man designed all three movies, and today he probably feels prey to sinister forces himself. A mere fortnight after I interviewed renowned film designer Ken Adam at the recent film festival in his natal Berlin - he emigrated to the west in 1934 for the usual reason (A. Hitler) - the cine-giant to whom we had devoted much of our conversation, Stanley Kubrick, suddenly died.

For Adam, who later won an Oscar for Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* (plus immortality for six more Bonds), Kubrick was "the nearest thing to a genius among directors I've worked with. When I started on *Strangelove* I found this rather shy New Yorker, full of charm, with these piercing eyes. He was incredibly demanding. He wanted to see what made you tick. You had to justify intellectually everything you did."

It was a perfect teaming. Two Wandering Jews - Kubrick was from Brooklyn - met and worked on a friendly island between them. In 1968 Kubrick had just settled in Britain. Adam had been there 30 years. The art student who narrowly escaped internment as a German national and then became a second world war fighter pilot was now signing the sets of major movies.

He is an earlier exodus of German art directors including Alfred Junge (*Black Narcissus*) and Hein Heckroth (*The Red Shoes*). Adam was befriended after the war by the American who invented the term "production design": William Cameron Menzies of *Gone With The Wind*. "He was a virtual alcoholic, but he taught me everything, how to heighten reality, to stylise, to use colour for effect."

Adam recreated Verne-era Europe (*Around The World In 80 Days*) and Wilde-era London (*The Trials of Oscar Wilde*). He built a fleet for Homer-era Troy (*Helen of Troy*). He even designed Sodom and Gomorrah for the same-name epic, putting back up what God had razed a few millennia before.

Now God had his revenge on Adam. Not only the year was perfect for paranoidos. So was that false Eden called Shepperton Studios.

"Stanley (Kubrick) taxed my talent to the breaking point. He would look over my shoulder as I was doodling sketches for the War Room" - the huge imaginary Pentagon bunker where most of *Strangelove* was set - "and say 'That's great, that's fabulous.'



Ken Adam: "Stanley taxed my talent to the breaking point. He would look over my shoulder as I was doodling sketches and say, 'That's fabulous'. Then at the last moment he would change his mind"

Designer of the Kubrick era

Nigel Andrews talks to Ken Adam, the man who won an Oscar for Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* and immortality for several Bond movies

Then at the last moment he would change his mind."

Suddenly realising that Adam's galleried design would need expensive extras prowling in the background to make it convincing, Kubrick told him to re-do it.

"I went into the gardens at Shepperton to calm down. That's when I started drawing the triangle shape for the room you see in the film. I've been quoted as calling Stanley I chose it because it's the strongest geometrical pattern.

But it was actually he who said that. Then he asked, 'What texture walls?' I said, 'Concrete.' He said, 'Like a giant bomb shelter? I said, 'Yes.'

So was born that surreal super-vast, vast and claustrophobic, where Kubrick pressure-cooked his black comedy that ended originally - with the biggest custard pie fight in history.

"It was quite brilliant, like *Half-a-Pennyworth*. You had George C. Scott swinging from the lighting and Peter Sellers (as the President) sitting in the middle of the room making custard 'sandcastles' with the Russian ambassador. After days of filming the room was ankle-deep in pie."

Blake Edwards of *The Pink Panther* was doodling sketches for the War Room - the huge imaginary Pentagon bunker where most of *Strangelove* was set - and say "That's great, that's fabulous."

Kubrick was the nearest thing to a genius among directors I've worked with. He was incredibly demanding. He wanted to see what made you tick'

sequence again recently and I must say I think he was right. It was very zany, a bit out of style with the rest of the film."

In off-duty hours, which scarcely existed, Adam drove Kubrick to and from the studio. "I had this E-type Jaguar and he wouldn't let me go over 30mph. I had to keep him entertained all the time with wartime stories,

every day for five months. Finally I ran out of stories and had to start inventing them."

"We were great friends, very close, almost like a marriage. At the same time - and this was the reason I didn't want to work with him again - I thought he had the power to destroy me."

Adam headed back to the security of *Bond*: straightforward movies that merely required Fort Knox to be recreated, large chunks of Rio to be set-dressed or a whole volcanic island to be blown up.

"That was in *You Only Live Twice*. Cubby Broccoli said I could spend \$1m but I had no time. Sean Connery's contract was running out and here was this 400-foot-long, 120-feet-high cavern to do, with a sloping lake in fibreglass! I called in civil engineers, construction engineers. I went crazy, broke out in eczema. I said, 'If this doesn't work I'll never design another film again.'

It worked. So did Adam's sets for *The Ipcress File*, *Sleuth*, *Pennies From Heaven*, *Addams Family Values*. So did two costume films that earned him Oscars. The second was *The Madness Of King George*. The first,

bated by some, loved by others (including me), was directed by the man Adam had vowed never to work with again.

"I was on a movie in the south of France. Stanley rang and said would I do *Barry Lyndon*. I said I couldn't. He said, 'You're getting too much money.' I said, 'Well,

we were great friends, very close. At the same time - and why I didn't want to work with him again - I thought he had the power to destroy me'

Stanley if you think I'm getting too much then forget it!' But he came back later saying, 'Ken, my designer doesn't understand me. The money will be taken care of.'

So Adam entered the new Kubrick nightmare. Half a dozen stately homes to be done up; the lighting to be all candles. "Everyone was talking about wicks instead of watts: double wick, tre-

bile wick. Nobody realises the heat those things give off! And the dripping. I had to design heat-shields to protect the ceilings and paintwork."

"Stanley wanted to do it as a documentary of the period, going by French, British and German painters. He thought it would be cheaper to do it on location. But the house-owners got wise and wanted a lot of money."

Adam's second escape from Kubrick was his last. Today he commutes comfortably between Britain and Germany, where he is designing the core section of Berlin's forthcoming millennium exhibition.

"It's called *Images and Signs of the 20th Century*, it's all about particle physics, genetic engineering, geo-physics, the brain. I was shocked when they asked me. I've never been scientific. The reason I said no to *2001: A Space Odyssey* was that Stanley had done all this research at NASA and I knew nothing."

But the returning Odysseus in Ken Adam said he should do it. So did others. "They all said 'Ken, you've got to.' Because this is my past. This was my home. This is the city that kicked me out."

tars make Orbit's presence felt. "Coffee and TV" is mellow, verging on melancholy, cool and sprightly all at the same time. There is even a sly reference to the group's "Battle of the Bands" period, when Blur's "Country House" beat Oasis's "Roll With It" to the number one slot in the UK charts: "Do you go to the country? It isn't very far. There's people there who will hurt you, because of who you are".

But the rest of *13* is as far from the chirpy charm of those so-called Britpop days as could be. Leaving aside the wearisome punk pastiche of "B.L.U.R.E.M.I.", the mood begins to turn irrevocably bleak. Orbit does fine job in texturing the sound - there is something of Eno's pioneering synthesiser work on the first Roxy Music album in these cold, stylish soundscapes - but the group's lingering mistrust of melody costs them.

"Mellow Song" is a just-as-successful marriage of downbeat tune and dissident accompaniment. But the weighty "Caramel", the obvious emotional core of *13*, takes too many liberties. The twining of Albarn's frank, pained lyrics and a pretentious crescendo is reminiscent of the worst excesses of 1970s progressive rock.

Crucially, "Caramel" tilts the balance of *13*: the album gets bogged down, becomes darker, less accessible, even uncomfortable. By the time Albarn re-runs his misery on "No Distance Left To Run" ("It's over, you don't have to tell me. I hope you're with someone who makes you feel safe in your sleep") it is hard to feel him.

But there is all the same much to applaud in *13*'s restless invention, which puts its talented authors at the very forefront of a currently stagnant pop scene.

Peter Aspen

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A show of beauty rather than energy

Jackson Pollock has arrived at the Tate Gallery from New York - and looks quite different, reports William Packer

Seen there, seen that - but don't you believe it. There may be those who, having seen the Jackson Pollock retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, where it enjoyed an astonishing success, think there would be no point in seeing it again in London, but they could hardly be more wrong.

Here his paintings appear the controlled and considered, consummately skilful objects of contemplation they are

With other forms of art, perhaps, the truth is more readily acknowledged: that a book re-read, an opera re-cast, music re-played, a play revisited, will bring to the work a new insight and a refreshed experience. But with the visual arts, so it goes, it will only be the same old pictures.

The truth is, of course, that even to switch the same paintings about on the same wall will certainly shift and question our view of them. And when a large body of them must perform be rearranged in a quite different



There is much more to Jackson Pollock than the drip-and-flow technique: 'Stenographic Figure', c.1942

its arrangement. The effect is that it highlights not so much the changes as the essential unity of the work.

At the Tate the rooms are higher, the pace is slower, and the day-light comes flooding in. What this shift in emphasis tells us is that while the energy and emotional drive so evident in New York was entirely true of Pollock the artist, and that his life, in all its sordid, boozey drift towards disaster, was a necessary and relevant gloss, there is another side to the work which is no less true. For here is the painter not as actor and

principal in his own drama, but as painter; and here his paintings appear the controlled and considered, consummately skilful objects of contemplation they undoubtedly are. It is a most important corrective. No doubt his reputation will always be hedged by the circumstances of his life, but here the work stands up for itself.

What that work tells us is that there is much more to Pollock than the drip-and-flow technique, that genuine innovation with which he achieved first notoriety and then celebrity. He was a

painter first and last, a true painter with brush and paint on the end of it, and drip-and-run occupied him for barely half-a-dozen years from the mid-1940s to the early 50s. By 1966, when he crashed to his death at the age of 46, he had abandoned it.

Even before he did so, he was working simultaneously with truly painted images, such as the black abstract landscapes of 1951 that are oddly redolent of some British neo-Romantic painting of the 1940s. Sutherland especially: Pollock always accepted that reference to

figure or landscape lay close to the surface of his imaginings, even at the end of it, and drip-and-run occupied him for barely half-a-dozen years from the mid-1940s to the early 50s. By 1966, when he crashed to his death at the age of 46, he had abandoned it.

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OFF-CENTRE



Matches in search of a real spectacle

The collapse of its star event is a further blow to the world of squash, writes Michael Steinberger

The British Open is the Wimbledon of squash. Its most coveted crown by far. In a sport plagued with fly-by-night tournaments, it has always been the one event that could be linked in on the calendar.

But this year, for the first time since it resumed play in 1947 following the second world war, the Open has been postponed and may not take place at all.

The week-long championship was due to start next Saturday in Birmingham, but a lack of sponsorship money will now keep the trophy behind glass at least until autumn, perhaps indefinitely.

Although the Squash Rackets Association, organiser of the Open, hopes to reschedule it for November, possibly in Scotland, no dates have been fixed, no flights booked.

With any other sport, a blow of this magnitude would prompt cries of anguish and howls of outrage. But the threatened demise of the British Open has elicited nothing more than a collective shrug from the squash world, which is sadly accustomed to such setbacks.

Over the years, efforts to win the game a place in the Olympics have yielded only frustration, with squash rebuffed time and again in favour of more fashionable supplements (which had more money to lavish on host cities).

In the meantime, what passes for squash's pro tour limps around the globe, hobbled by paity purses and amateurish productions; for its long-suffering

stars, stoicism and a sense of humour are almost as important as a crushing forehand and a feathery drop shot. In short, squash is a game desperately seeking its moment in the sun.

That respect has proved elusive is not entirely surprising, given that squash traces its origins to a 19th century English debtors' prison. These days, it is an old sport with a very modern problem: even if it gets air time it doesn't play well on TV.

Last year's British Open earned 20 minutes on the BBC's *Grandstand*, and Asia's *ESPN Star Sports* occasionally covers matches, but squash junkies generally have to look elsewhere for fix. The small ball, odd angles, indoor setting and arcane scoring all conspire to make squash a dud on the little screen.

Countless dollars and hours have been spent trying to turn it into a more telegraphic affair - ball and court have been painted and repainted endlessly in pursuit of a colour combination pleasing to the camera - but mostly to no avail.

To compensate for the listless quality of televised squash, the sport's governing bodies have lately taken to doing the next best thing: placing events in picturesque venues. Cairo's Al Abram International is now staged at the base of the pyramids; New York's recent Tournament of Champions laid siege to Grand Central Station.

But all eyes eventually fall on the matches themselves, and



'If it's money you're interested in, don't play squash. I'm on the tour because I enjoy the lifestyle.'

I like travelling around the world'

Qatar, for which the winner, Canada's Jonathon Power, received a \$25,000 cheque. A typical squash tournament, however, sends its champion home with only about \$5,000, roughly half of what a first-round loser at Wimbledon gets.

The 24-year-old Power, ranked second behind Scotland's Peter Nicol, has made his peace with the minor-league pay. "If it's money you're interested in, don't play squash," he says. "I'm on the tour because I enjoy the lifestyle. I like travelling around the world and playing in all these obscure places. Now that I've reached the top I expect a few

rewards, but for me it has never been about the money."

Things aren't all bleak, of course. The on-court exploits of world No 3 Ahmed Barada have made him a national hero in Egypt and given squash a lift throughout the Middle East. Likewise, strong recreational interest has helped keep the curtain raised on several tournaments in south-east Asia, despite the recession there.

In many quarters, too, squash boasts considerable social caché. It is surely one of the few sports in which the spectators

are often wealthier than the athletes.

And in one important respect squash is an easier sell these days: rarely has the game seen greater parity among its heavy hitters. Australians Michelle Martin and Sara Fitz-Gerald have

given the women's tour its most

electrifying rivalry ever, trading the No 1 ranking several times over the past four seasons and treating fans to some memorable clashes along the way.

Meanwhile, without an all-conquering Khan to contend with for the first time in two decades, the men's game has become an intriguing free-for-all. Pakistan's

Jahangir Khan, who reduced nearly every tournament he entered in the 1980s to a battle of bridesmaids - during one cruel stretch, he went over five years and 500 matches without a loss, a feat surely unparalleled in the annals of modern sport - retired in 1993; his successor, Jansher Khan (same country, no relation), was not as invincible, but still seldom tasted defeat.

A rash of recent injuries has knocked the 29-year-old Jansher off the circuit, opening the door for a new generation of stars, prominent among them Power, Nicol, Barada and England's Paul Johnson. An eclectic mix of styles, temperaments and passports, they have infused the tour with more diversity and panache than it had in years.

The hope now is that this colourful cast of characters can lead squash out of the athletic wilderness. While conceding that television will always be a weak link, John Nimek, executive director of the Professional Squash Association, is confident that added competition and charismas at the top will stir interest in the game and help bring it more respectability.

"We'll never be as big as tennis," he says, "but overtaking badminton, which is in the Olympics and has more prize money than we do, is an achievable goal."

For the moment, though, Nimek's chief aim is simply to get the British Open back on track: "If we can't stage the British Open, that's a bad sign."

perspective, is to work a long string of nights, say four to six weeks. The idea is that each person can group together their nights for the year and only have to shift their circadian rhythms twice, once on to nights and once back again. Everyone will work hard for that one period, but have 10 to 11 months of the year when they will only work an occasional night, on special cover.

The worst thing is the zombie schedule such as working 14 out of 15 days, 16-hour shifts, unpredictable and excessive overtime.

The strategy often used in Europe is to work as few nights in a row as possible, ideally one. The idea is to never shift the circadian rhythms but to maintain a constant diurnal orientation. Working four to seven-night shifts in a row is universally condemned. The body suffers from inappropriate phasing during each night shift and then just when the body starts to adapt to nights, it switches back again.

Aspirants face peculiar time shift difficulties. When orbiting the earth every 90 minutes, they experience 16 sunrises every 24 hours. The interior of the spacecraft is kept very bright and the astronauts receive doses of bright light and melatonin. A great deal has been learnt from the space flights and the speed of advances in chrono-biology makes it likely that it will soon be possible to adjust circadian rhythms rapidly using combinations of light and drugs.

If that possibility is realised, then workers will be able to adjust their rhythms to match their working conditions.

Leon Kretzman is the author of *24 Hour Society*. Profile Books £16.99.

Something of the night about too many of us

Shiftwork is on the increase, says Leon Kretzman, but it can seriously damage your health

In Japan, they call it *karoshi*. The Americans talk of shift lag. The universal acronym is Tatt - tired all the time. They are all talking about the same thing, the effects of night-working on our daily biological (circadian) rhythms.

Night-working is hardly new. Earlier this century, far more people worked at night - in the mines, mills and factories - than do so now. But in those days, they were nearly all unskilled working class. Now it is the middle classes that are having to learn to work shifts and some are kicking and screaming.

In the US, there is in many ways leading the way into the 24-hour world, 20m people regularly work at night. In Australia, the Bureau of Statistics estimates that about 20 per cent of the workforce is on shift rosters, and the number is increasing. The national chief executive of the Australian Chamber of Manufacturers, Allan Handberg, says shift work will become increasingly common as economic imperatives force companies into round-the-clock production.

Official UK data from the Employment Department suggests that at the very least a little over 1m people work at some time of the night. Given that some day-time employees will occasionally work into the evening, it can be estimated that up to 4m people work in the late evening or during the night over the course of a year. More will have to do so.

A shrinking manufacturing sector competing on a global basis faces intense pressure to get the maximum return from its fixed costs. Modern machinery becomes obsolete before it wears out, so it is vital that machinery use is maximised. If plant A operates 168 hours a week and plant B works only 50 hours, then plant A will have unit capital costs about one-third that of plant B. This, rather than lower labour costs, is more significant in the debate about international competitiveness in manufacturing. The result is continual 24-hour factory production.

At the same time, the growing services sector in a deregulated environment has to be open when the demand is there. This is one of the lessons to be drawn from opening shops on Sundays. Added to that is a coming generation unfamiliar with the word wait. If being middle class used to mean self-delusion, it now means self-gratification. Today's teenagers take it as a personal affront if they cannot have what they want right now. The successful supplier will be the one who can profitably meet customer demands, whatever they are and whenever they are made. If that happens to be in the middle of the night or first thing the next morning, then so be it.

Many UK businesses are still working to a time pattern, set long before the second world war, which bears no relation to the way the world operates now. Added to that is a coming generation unfamiliar with the word wait. If being middle class used to mean self-delusion, it now means self-gratification. Today's teenagers take it as a personal affront if they cannot have what they want right now. The successful supplier will be the one who can profitably meet customer demands, whatever they are and whenever they are made. If that happens to be in the middle of the night or first thing the next morning, then so be it.

The public has become used to saving time by buying convenience foods and microwave ovens; they also know about value for time, namely that an experience that uses up time should be a worthwhile

experience and provide them with value for the time they have given up. Now they are learning about the third of the time criteria - time choice, or having the freedom to choose when to do something.

As a result, millions more will have to work non-conventional hours to satisfy the demand for goods and services at times dictated by the customer's wants.

But there is no getting away from the fact that working the night-shift can be hard. Some researchers consider the health effects of working rotating shifts - days on, then nights - are as damaging as smoking a packet of cigarettes a day. Night-workers can suffer from higher levels of

indigestion, ulcers, diabetes and ischaemic heart disease, probably resulting from eating inappropriate and difficult-to-digest meals during the night. Other problems include chronic fatigue, excessive sleepiness, and difficulty in sleeping.

Part of the social toll on those who must work rotating shifts is reflected in an increased divorce rate. Shift workers are also known to have higher rates of substance abuse and depression, and are much more likely to view their jobs as extremely stressful.

Yet the pressure is on for a 24-hour world in which the old nine to five, five days a week with weekends off work pattern is a minority pursuit.

Those who work at night perform less well and make more errors. In Britain, sleep-related workplace accidents cost at least £114m a year. The risk of injury on the night-shift is more than 30 per cent higher than on the day shift.

The key NASA officials involved in the Challenger space shuttle disaster made the decision to go ahead after working for 24 hours and having had only two to three hours of sleep the night before. Their error of judgment cost the lives of seven astronauts and nearly killed the US space programme.

The best thing from a circadian



An out-of-body experience in more ways than one

All it took was two days and a look at the competition, and Marisa D'Vari became a New Age zealot

I stood over me, making sure I drank enough water to flush the toxins out forever.

"If you don't," she warned darkly, "they can come back and recirculate."

Horrors. Liver and spleen sparkling clean, I bounded over to my herbal wrap appointment.

"We use ginger, clove, allspice, and rosemary in this treatment," explained the chipper attendant, layering my body with fragrant spa sheets.

When I was swaddled as a mummy, she left the room, pron-

ing to check on me from time to time.

"It'll be OK; no need for it," I assured her. This was baby stuff compared with being left alone in a room with 1,000 needles impaled in my body in an acupuncturing treatment.

Though I had only hoped to lose that last crucial fox of water that stood between bikini bliss and madness, I was surprised to find myself having something skin to an out-of-body experience.

Where was I? Who was I? Did I

matter? I felt my chi soaring pleasantly through the universe.

The next day it was on to another massage. Ayurveda is an ancient Indian philosophy that categorises people by body types into three groups.

Because the therapist wanted to counteract the fire and water attributes of my type, she applied herbs for the thin, eat-like-a-bird Vata body type and the rounded, slow-moving Kapha body type in a paste all over my body, then sloughed them off with a loofah-like sponge before massaging a fragrant oil into my skin and wrapping me in warm towels.

"Is this my frame athletic? Yes. Do I speak sharply at times? Yes. When I'm hungry, do I need to eat immediately? Definitely.

"I'll leave you to relax in the darkened room for five minutes," she said, off to brew Ayurveda tea.

"Make it 15," I pleaded, remembering my delicious soul-soothing experience the previous day with the herbal treatment. Even before I heard the door close, I fell virtually unconscious. The sensation was intense, powerful, exhilarating, yet relaxing at the same time.

Lured to the Phoenician's Centre for Well Being for a cosmetic sprucing up, I left a New Age zealot. That night, at the hotel bar, I sipped mineral water.

The Phoenician, 6000 East Camelback Road, Scottsdale, Arizona 85251. Tel: 602-941 8200, reservations 602-947 4311.

What's a centre for well being?" my husband asked as we walked through the grounds of Arizona's Phoenician Resort.

"It's the resort's spa, where they have all sorts of unconventional treatments... herbal wraps, Ayurvedic massage... very spiritual. You should try one. It would balance your chi."

"Thanks... I'll stick to golf." While the Phoenician Resort's golf course is world class, so is the spa, offering treatments to heal both body and mind. Meditation classes are held daily, and tarot reading is available.

I'm for all things New Age and spiritual, but as soon as I saw the sleekness of the competition at the poolside, a baser instinct kicked in.

"I need to look great in a swim-

uit."

Something of
light about
many of us

J. M. M. 150



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how to spend it



A slice of life need not be brutal

High quality knives are worth an investment. Holly Finn asks London's best chefs for their most cutting remarks about the essential kitchen utensil

The Romans were a quirky bunch. Take their cuts, if now cryptic, names for days of the month: the Kalends on the 1st, the Nones on the 5th or 7th, and the Ides on the 13th or 15th – depending on the month. For any other day, they added and subtracted. So, thinking Romanesque today isn't Saturday, it's Two Days Before The Ides. And not just any Ides, the Ides of March.

We're not as admiring of the ancients as we might be. March 15 was a big day for them – the festival of their new year, and the day one of their greatest was cut down. Poor old Caesar didn't know what slashed him until it was too late and he started talking like Bob Dole, in the third person (see Shakespeare: "Et tu, Brutus! Then fall, Caesar.").

I'm not suggesting blood red cocktails on Monday. There's certainly no need for a return to togas and vomitoriums. No need to pay the soothsayer, either. But shouldn't we do something to celebrate the day of be-warness? In honour of the things that slay us, we take a look at how to choose the best knife for the job.

The quality of a knife depends on much more than meets the eye, but mostly on the blade. All are made of steel, which is why, traditionally, blades have been manufactured in towns such as Solingen, Germany, and Sheffield, England – known for their supplies of metal and facilities for metal-working.

The composition of steel can, of course, vary as much as the loyalty of an emperor's friends. The amount of carbon is what determines the metal's ability to take an edge and to be resharpenable. Unfortunately, carbon also leads to rust and discoloration, so other agents need to be added.

"Stainless steel" includes a high proportion of chromium, which makes the metal rust-proof, but also harder to resharpen. Today, high carbon, no-stain steel is the preferred industry standard. It is at once non-corrosive, though not quite enough to be called stainless, and still able to retain an edge. Other alloying agents, such as vanadium and molybdenum, can also be added, to further strengthen and harden the metal.

The shape of the blade is either forged or stamped. Forged blades are formed singly, when a lump of hot steel is hammered into shape, blacksmith style. This way, a solid extension of metal called a "shoulder" is created, which will firmly join blade to handle. Stamped – or blanked – blades don't have this feature. They are cut from a sheet of rolled-out steel, many at a time, like a pie top from pastry dough.

Some say that forged blades are inherently stronger, because they have been hammered so much; their molecular structure is actually denser, while stamped blades, made from

steel that's been spread out during rolling, is less resilient. Either way, the blade receives what's called a Rockwell measurement, gauging its flexibility, strength and hardness. "32C-64C" is good enough for Brutus, good enough for you.

The grinding and sharpening of the blade edge is crucial. Again, things get a little molecular. Because the metal has been heated and cooled, its molecules have expanded, then contracted in a random pattern. To realign them, the blade edge is ground, usually in a "V" shape that tapers to a point. In the process, the molecules become perpendicular to the edge, their tops forming a sharp, sawing surface. When a knife goes dull, it is because these molecules are out of whack (the edge having turned to one side or another) and they need to be realigned in order to cut smoothly.

These are the basics. Of course, knives also vary cosmetically – offering a choice between a wood or synthetic handle, for example – and functionally. There are plain old paring knives, and slicers in a variety of sizes. Then there are tomato knives, with or without double prongs at the tip, trimming knives, salami knives, salmon knives, decorating knives for putting the groove in crudités, boxy cleavers, standard steak knives, curved skinning knives,

confectioners' tapered knives, even frozen food knives with edges so elaborately carved in the steel, they're rococo.

But which of these is really necessary? For Gordon Ramsay, chef and owner of the restaurant in Chelsea, a superior carving knife is essential.

His is from Wüsthof, a German family-owned business that has been making professional quality kitchen knives (including the frozen food model) for six generations. Thin, serrated and flexible, with a gapless bond between handle and blade, Ramsay's

samurai swords". First designed in 1985, these knives are to the 1990s what Saberder knives were to the 1980s: the It Utensil.

Both blade and curiously aspirated handle (high-tech holes have been punched in) are forged from the same block of stainless steel, which has been strengthened with molybdenum and vanadium, and hardened to Rockwell 58C-60C.

Gordon's favourite model is a basic, lightweight cooking knife. As he tends to use the same knife for everything, he has chosen this one because it stays

utensil not only saves flavour, but digits. "I never cut myself with a sharp knife," says Edelman, "only with a blunt knife." This is because dull blades lose their grip more easily. They also sap elbow energy.

Despite all the technical advances in kitchen machinery, Edelman remains a great believer in hands-on cooking and in the well-made manual tools that make it possible, like Chicago's. "Nothing beats the hand for precision in cooking," he says, "which is strange when you think we go to the moon."

Chef Stephen Bull is not as much a fan of what he calls "designer knives". He finds them "too finely engineered", sometimes so fragile that they chip, bend or split at the end. He has "always been happy with the rather humble Victorinox", a Swiss-made range of knives.

Wood-handled, strongly riveted and well-curved, Bull's knife allows him to get the "good rocking motion" which is key to his preparation. "A knife is rather like a jug," he says. "Jugs don't have to do many things. But it's rare to find one that pours but doesn't drip."

Knife design may seem static to the lay cook, but strides are still being made in an industry that's as old as cave art.

Peter Gordon, the chef behind the Sugar Club's exotic dishes, prefers a knife made by Japanese manufacturer Global which, he says, "decided to make knives the quality of

sharp, is easy to use, and fits the unusual handle satisfactorily ergonomic.

At The Savoy, Anton

Edelman's preferred knife

is from the Legacy Forged

range of an American

manufacturer, Chicago

Cutterly. A medium chopping

knife, it boasts a walnut

handle, a very wide blade,

has a beautiful balance and cuts awfully well!"

Edelman is not convinced that a superior knife will turn a bad chef into a culinary genius, but says it can make a difference.

Finely chopped vegetables,

for instance, actually taste different.

And a fine chopping

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She ain't heavy, she's my mother

Holly Finn suggests spending time walking in support of breast cancer research, then celebrating la grande dame with a glass of champagne

Sometimes saying thank you is just not enough. When someone has cooked you salmon en croute. Or, when you are buying a lone tube of toothpaste on your way home, the person ahead of you in the supermarket line who has a cartful of food has let you go first. Or, on a different level altogether, when someone has given birth to you.

They say one of the most stressful jobs is being a fighter pilot and landing your jet on the narrow strip of an aircraft carrier in choppy seas. Well, motherhood must be right up there – and more. Starting with labour and going on seemingly forever.

in between it involves a deal more low-visibility navigation than any combat manoeuvre.

Mothers do a hell of a job, and tomorrow is their day in Britain. On other holidays, a box of chocolates might be enough. For this, there are better ways of spending it – in terms of true value for money and time spent. Here's one: take a walk. Tomorrow, all over the country, walks are organised by Breakthrough Breast Cancer to fund vital new breast cancer research.

Founded by Bill Freedman in 1991, after his wife died, the charity has, with the Institute for Cancer Research, opened the first treatment and research

centre in the UK wholly dedicated to tackling breast cancer: the Breakthrough Tony Robbins Research Centre in Fulham, south-west London. So far £1.5m has been raised. A further £5.5m a year is needed to bolster existing programmes and to start new ones.

Breast cancer is the single most common cause of death among women in the UK aged 35–54. Because mothers have always been around when you needed them, and because they would like them to stay that way, it's a very good Mother's day gift would be to take time (just think of how long she spent making you all that marmite on toast) to join one of these walks. Money can be contributed through walk sponsorships, or directly donated to the charity.

Cherry Grout, a mother of three in Buckinghamshire, found a lump last year that turned out to be non-malignant. A friend of hers was not so lucky, and died from breast cancer. So Grout will be walking with her three children tomorrow.

"All I want for Mother's day is healthy happy children and a loving healthy husband," she says. "It's the healthy bit that matters... And maybe a home-made card, none of this shop-bought nonsense."

Sound familiar? It's what your mother taught you: others should be treated as you wish to be, your shoes should be kept well-mended so you never look down at heel, and thoughtful presents trump shallow, splashy ones every time.

Which is not to say that, having walked the walk, you and your mother don't deserve to celebrate. With a bottle of Veuve Clicquot La Grande Dame perhaps? Named after Madame Clicquot herself, a pioneer in rose champagnes (which Veuve Clicquot was the first to export and still does), the 1990 vintage is 61 per cent Pinot Noir, 38 per cent Chardonnay. It's a heady mix of sweet and nutty tastes that will make those skin splinters disappear in no time.

So lace up your boots and get out there tomorrow. Some of the walks are just 1½ miles long, some are up to 10. Whichever, you will be spending it – time and money – and doing your mother proud. A toast to that.

Breakthrough Breast Cancer, Fifth Floor, Kingsway House, London WC2B 6QX. Main no: 0171-405 5111; Contact number for the walks: 0373-623710; web site: www.breakthrough.org.uk

Veuve Clicquot La Grande Dame 1990 (£55) and La Grande Dame Rosé 1998 (£25) are available from Fortnum & Mason (0171-734 8940), Harrods (0171-730 1234), Harvey Nichols (0171-235 5000) and Selfridges (0171-629 1234).

Additional research by Edwina Ings-Chambers.

Essential

2005 – a space oddity

It's been called the bag of the future, like no other you have seen – and bag ladies with lots of cash are snapping it up. Have they been enlightened, or duped? Fashion correspondent Vanessa Friedman deconstructs the Chanel fashion accessory that cannot be ignored

Same time, last year. Place: the Chanel boutique on Avenue Montaigne. Occasion: the autumn/winter show. Hemlines had dropped, waists were loosening up. clients were ecstatic about the Gatsby-ness of it all.

Except, amid all that retro, there was something odd. Held in the crook of Naomi Campbell's arm and cradled by Linda Evangelista, was something resembling the offspring of a manta ray and a Philippe Starck household appliance.

"The Chanel 2005" proclaimed Karl Lagerfeld backstage to scribbling editors. "The bag of the future."

Given that the house of Chanel has long been producing The Bag for a certain sort of well-heeled woman (in case you didn't know, the official name of the quilted number is the "2.55"), and given the recent resurgence in the popularity of other bags from the past – Hermès's Kelly and Birkin, the ubiquitous beaded purse – this was no small statement. It was big-time, a kind of Amelia Bloomer throw-off-the-past moment, a Coco Chanel jackets-should-be-cardigans moment.

As the prototypes finally enter the shops, and "2005" the next generation" is toted

squishy and stuffable. It doesn't, at least at this point, telegraph "Chanel" (it barely telegraphs "handbag"). It puzzles people.

"It's a weird shape," said Joan Juliet Buck, editor of French Vogue, at the last show.

"It looks like it was moulded from an aeroplane seat," observed Suzy Menkes of the Herald-Tribune.

"But it's an interesting, weird shape," added Buck.

In many ways, "interesting" is the operative word when it comes to the 2005. When you go beyond first impressions and start to probe into the detail of the bag, it turns out to be as much an intellectual construct as an accessory.

Just take the name. Most women, if they thought about it at all, would think "OK, millennium", but that isn't the half of it. The "2", for example, indicates the fact that the bag had its debut two years before 2000 – not in 2000 itself. The "00" designates the international dialling code, which in turn designates the international clientele of the house. As for the "5", well, Chanel No 5 springs to mind.

And that's just the beginning. "For me, the shape is the most important thing," says Lagerfeld. It's aerodynamic, and it mimics

from the waist down, or, reversed, a female torso. The curves mean the bag fits a woman's body like a kind of organic accessory, hugging the hip, or smogging tight against the waist if tucked under one's arm.

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out on the runway, it seems a fitting time to take a cold, clear look at the substance of Lagerfeld's claim.

The first thing you notice about the 2005 is what it isn't. It isn't, for example, rectangular. It isn't quilted. It isn't attached to a gold chain. It isn't soft and

the form of a woman's body. There is nothing pointy. It's in the spirit of all the cars we are seeing now."

From the side, the 2005 bears more than a passing resemblance to the relaunched and newly cool VW bug. Head-on, it looks either like a female body

Such shapes may occur in nature, but not usually in handbags and it took a year of computer design to achieve the form.

Virtual reality programs, 3D imaging and aerodynamic engineering techniques were used. The result is an aluminium frame (a material favoured in the aerospace industry), which supports two perfectly symmetrical hard sides of polyethylene (formed by injecting the lightweight thermoplastic into a mould) that open and shut with one flick of the wrist.

Polyethylene, which is chemical- and moisture-resistant, is normally used in packaging and insulation, not handbags, but you can see its

advantages: it forms a rigid shell, while remaining lightweight. The 2005 weighs only 780g. The 2005 isn't all futuristic, advanced fabrication however. It also has a traditional Chanel-y aspect. Each side of the 2005 is covered by hand in the house's signature tweed or jersey, and the curves of the two body pieces – covers – which blossom out into a pair of rounded, very suggestive, shapes at the bottom – signify the house's name.

The twin-C logo is still there, though this time engraved on two aluminium

discs which winkle out from either side of the bags like eyes. The whole thing opens like one of Lagerfeld's signature fans, exposing an interior composed of eight nylon mesh pockets of varying sizes for the handbag necessities of life: a mobile phone, diary, compact, pen, breath mints.

At last October's show, on model, in bathing suit and towel, proceeded to lie on the runway floor à la sun worshipper, placing her 2005 under her head. "I'd use it for sleeping on an aeroplane," said model Karen Elson, miming the bag's myriad functions after the

show. "Or you could use it as a seat" – placing it under her bottom – or "if you wanted, as a spare pair of bosoms!" (This last is debatable.)

"It's a weapon," said Lagerfeld, tapping the firm sides and genially demonstrating the bag's self-defence capabilities in the case of attempted mugging. "You just... whack!"

It's a costly whack, however. At £1,010 for the standard size, and £255 for the mini, the 2005 is slightly more expensive than the 2.55 (£225). And some may feel that the finish, at that price, leaves something to be desired. Will women think that technical and symbolic invention, even at the

expense of beauty, is worth it? Will they, should they, get it?

"We had the biggest waiting list we have ever had for a bag for the 2005," says Josiane el-Kabbany, the manager of Chanel's Sloane Street store. "As soon as customers saw it in the runway catalogue, they wanted it. There are about 150 names."

So they are getting it, literally. Metaphorically is another matter. "I think customers respond to it on an intellectual level," says el-Kabbany. "No, probably not. I don't think women think about it that way."

An ad hoc poll of dedicated Chanel customers who had ordered the bag yielded up one woman who wanted the 2005 because she had read its semiotic message and was thinking: "Yes, I'll get this handbag because it will say to all who see me: here's someone who cares about ergonomics, the interaction between past and future, a nod to the designer, and multiple functions."

Rather, the 2005 purchasers

how to spend it

fell into one of two categories: women who are "bag freaks, and always want the latest styles", to quote one client; and women who, to quote another, "like the practicality of the pockets – they mean I don't have to dig around blindly to find what I want".

Historically, the allure of Chanel has never been intellectual, it has always been emotional and elitist. Women buy Chanel because it's accessible and recognisable – to those who wear it and those around them. The 2005 is a departure from that simple standard, because it is complicated.

(Face it; if you want a complicated and intellectual, you shop at Comme des Garçons.)

But as the 2005 is as immediately recognisable as any Chanel item to date, it's quite possible the 2005 will become a lasting sub-species of the Chanel brand, rather than petering out in a Darwinian fight with the 2.55.

At the least, it's likely to prove a clever marketing tool for reinvigorating the brand, prompting a sort of sartorial evolutionary spike by drawing in new blood in the form of new customers. Not surprisingly, it is the younger customer, the one who works with ergonomic keyboards and takes Tae Kwon Do, who is most likely to appreciate the 2005.

So is it the bag of the future? Well, let's just say it would be – not pretty, but provocative, to think so.

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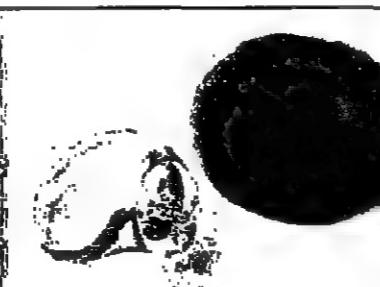
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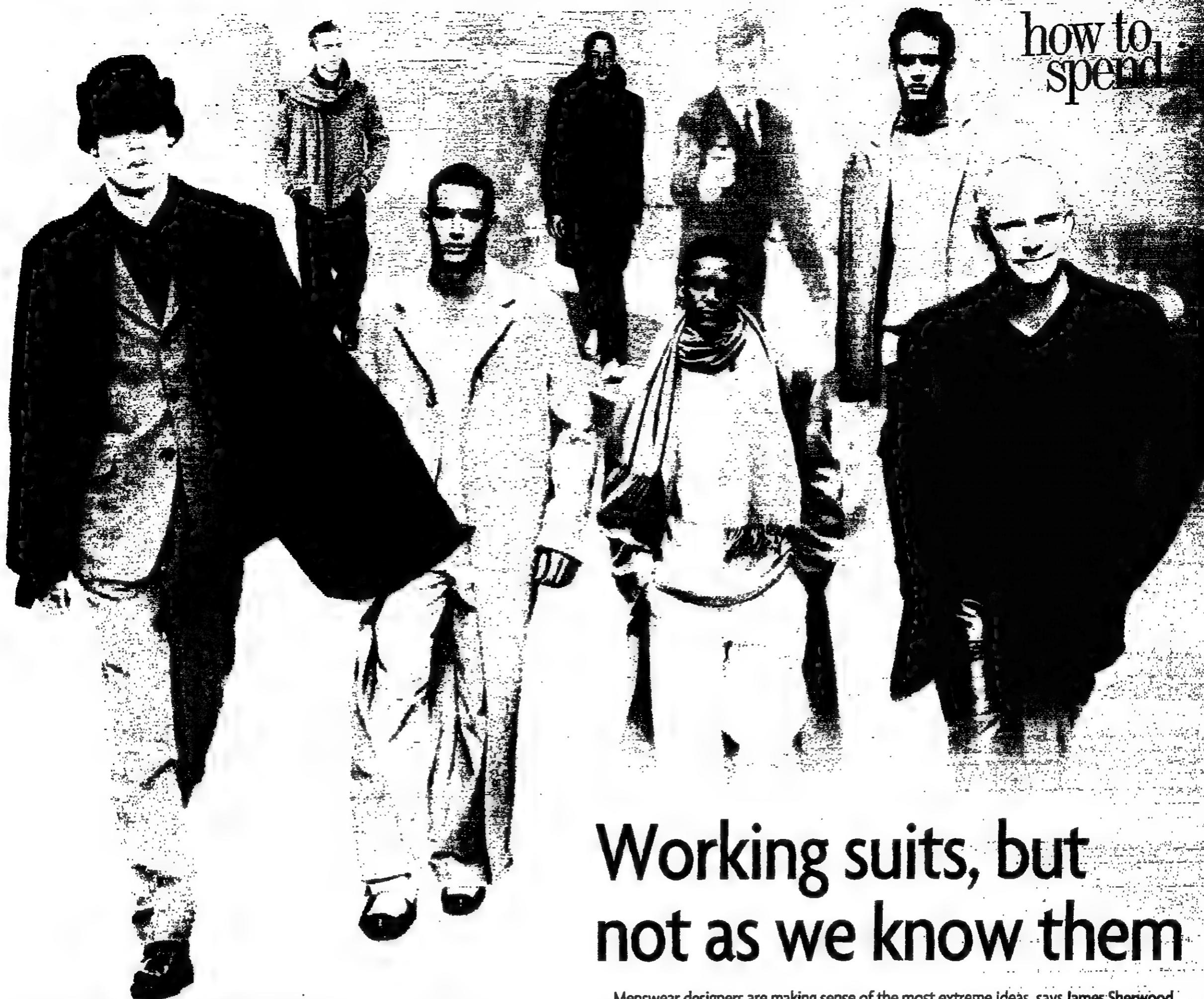


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Working suits, but not as we know them

Menswear designers are making sense of the most extreme ideas, says James Sherwood. All are agreed: the heavily constructed suit in traditional fabric has had its day

You could hear a pinstripe drop: menswear for autumn/winter 1999-2000 is loosened up and streamlined. So now's the time for British men to cast off the ties that bind, and throw on a pashmina. Clockwise from left to right: Armand Basí, Paul Costelloe, Gianfranco Ferré, John Rocha, Krizia, Cerruti and Hermès

Photograph: Ollie Woods/Homage Michael Meigh



One of Breguet's most ingenious watches is also one of the most useful. Patented in 1791, it embodies an automatic perpetual equation of time - showing the difference between mean time and true solar time - and a perpetual calendar.

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Most men will not admit that fashion has any impact on their working life. British men, in particular, bull-headed persist in ignoring the catwalk. Most would not be able to say who Walter van Bierendouck is. In fact, he is the Belgian designer who showed a skin-tight black bodystocking - complete with hood, gloves and visor - as menswear for the millennium.

OK, a male bodystocking isn't likely to convert fashion agnostics. Nor are headscarves tied - HRH style - under the chin at Comme des Garçons for autumn/winter 1999-2000 in Milan. Or Italian label D-Squared's tight white briefs with moon-boots and matching fur coat.

Menswear designers don't do themselves any favours. Every season they give doubters far too many reasons to ignore their names. But nevertheless the autumn/winter 1999-2000 menswear shows matter; they remind the British male that he needs to get in on the act.

In Milan, Geneva or Copenhagen, unless you frequent certain after-hours clubs, you don't see executives in fur moon-boots. Continental men have a very precise, very defined uniform.

The suit, probably Prada, is black single-breasted, with enough stretch in it not to crease. The loafers are black and the silver belt buckle is probably Gucci. Instead of a shirt and tie, the working wardrobe allows for a monotonous merino wool sweater. Accessories, from Ferragamo pigskin attaché case to Patek Philippe watch, are correct.

Image is the altar at which continental men worship. Fashion and labels matter less to them than does the ability to manage others' perceptions of them. This is the era of communication, after all, and clothing is a language. It communicates an attitude. By refusing to address fashion, men make themselves monosyllabic.

Apart from the handful of advertising executives who discovered Yohji Yamamoto in the late 1980s, British businessmen still cling to the chalkstripe suit with shirt and tie.

Despite a few fast-forward

pieces of catwalk nonsense, menswear generally moves at an understandable pace. Changes are minuscule - the depth of a turn-up, the number of buttons on a single-breasted jacket, the shade of camel used for a trenchcoat. While wild tangents may point towards broader trends, the core designer collections speak clearly about what's right right now.

The most fundamental trend for next autumn/winter is the complete relaxation of tailoring. If it's as if the suit has breathed a sigh of relief and eased up around the body. Fashion magazines may prematurely report the death of tailoring, but the two-piece suit is still the cornerstone of a working man's wardrobe. But not as we know it.

This season designers have reached a consensus: a heavily constructed suit in traditional fabric is not modern. Bulk is bad, as is excess padding, linings and superfluous detail.

Giorgio Armani has designed the prototype for relaxed tailoring in 2000. For

need to loosen up, to streamline rather than don the traditional pinstripe flannel armour. So Cerruti, Costume National and Kenzo, for example, have produced collections of separate jackets and pants.

As for colour, there's nothing to be afraid of this autumn/winter. Costume National and Versace may lead the way, but designers have again agreed on the basic virtue of black. Hermès' black leather pants worn with a suit jacket encourages men to mix-up fabrics, pulling the look together with one tone. Leather, suede, angora and cashmere already have a VIP pass to a working man's wardrobe in Europe.

The "smart casual" issue is perhaps the biggest sticking point for British men; they don't know how to finesse it and, as the designer shows have made clear, they should. The Krizia collection explained how to wear fine camel cashmere coats over off-white knits and more casual trousers. These "coffee shop colours" spilled

Every season menswear designers give doubters far too many reasons to ignore their names. But the autumn/winter shows matter

autumn/winter, Armani presented a "Men without ties" collection, putting fine cashmere funnel neck sweaters under easy stretch suiting. He mounted soft jackets to the body and took all the detail away from suit trousers - making them slim-fitting with no pleat or turn-up. The concept is suiting that fits like a second skin and feels weightless.

All menswear designers give the customer a variation on the two-piece suit, though not all are shown on the catwalk. Gucci's embroidered denim jeans may make headlines, but there will always be a dozen black, three-button suits in stores worldwide. Now that suit jacket is reworked. It's a hybrid of a jacket and a more casually cut coat.

Designers are not trying to spin-doctor menswear away from the traditional. They just seem to agree that men

fashion fools. The industry may talk down the London menswear shows, but they provided a showcase for two of the most inspired menswear collections of the season.

John Rocha gave us a masterclass in relaxed tailoring with velvet suiting cut like a frock coat that refused to look retro or fancy dress. His cashmere and mohair knits were snappy without being stuffy. The flashes of Mongolian lamb and ponykin give men the something-more-than-minimal demand from a designer piece.

Paul Costelloe's collection swathed a pashmina print scarf over the two-piece suit, which personalised an otherwise pokka Donegal tweed. Here were flashes of inspiration that could be toned up or down.

Menswear in Britain has never had it so good. Savile Row reinvented itself five years ago and now includes "new establishment" tailors Richard James and Oswald Boateng. The British have access to the cream of international designer fashion. They have a high street second to none. There is also a secret weapon: a further tier of designer menswear that consistently makes sense of the more extreme catwalk trends.

Joseph's most recent capsule menswear collection for autumn/winter takes basic luxe fabrics such as grey alpaca and cream-boiled wool and moulds them, beautifully, into the softer shapes of the season.

The prestigious house of Burberry is perhaps the most worthy of watching. Having repackaged its brand of Englishness to accommodate key global menswear trends, it recently showed a 100 per cent camel cashmere coat that tells you all you need to know about the direction menswear is taking.

The coat is cut generously. It is unlined, the inside as exquisitely finished as the outside. It is good design well-executed and, from among the thousands of garments shown on the international catwalks, it is the one item every smart man will want to choose come 2000. British men, in particular,

COOKERY

Mellow yellow meals

Philippa Davenport prefers her smoked haddock with colour

Yellow brings a Midas touch to mealtimes. Cloud-soft mounds of butter and cheese-enriched polenta have taken over from mashed potato as the number one comfort food among young and trendy vegetarians, while corn-on-the-cob has become highly fancied anytime snack, painted with melted butter, dusted with chilli powder and rolled in chopped green coriander.

Golden oldies are coming back into fashion, too. Who can resist the buttercup richness of well-salted Welsh farm butter made from the milk of Guernsey or Jersey cows, dripping from crumpets and toasts on a cold winter afternoon? Proper old-fashioned pouring custard (*crème anglaise*, not *crème fraîche*) is first choice to accompany crumbles, pies and sponge puddings.

And smoked haddock is prized above all other fish by loyal Scots, *the fish* for sustaining breakfast, lunch and supper dishes, and capable of dressing up if so required.

Until about 15 years ago, smoked haddock was nearly always bright yellow – the result of azo dyes used during the curing process. Now their use is being phased out in favour of natural colourants, and a growing number of fish-smokers employ no colourants at all.

I have to confess, though, that I relished the contrast of vivid yellow flakes of fish and white grains of rice in such dishes as kedgeree. But a little lateral thinking has suggested a happy solution. In the recipe given below, pale fish is foiled by yellow rice, gilded by the natural pigment of turmeric.

Turmeric has long been

available to British cooks but its use has been largely restricted to concocting the curious cauliflower pickle known as piccalilli.

Turmeric has frequently been mentioned in recipe books down the years as an alternative to saffron. This strikes me as unfair to both spices, for the aroma and taste of the two are very different. The only characteristic they share is a dramatic staining power.

I think it was Elizabeth David who described saffron as giving dishes a Mediterranean

Strong, sweet, musky and sophisticated, saffron seems to possess a faint whiff of burning tyres

mean accent, and turmeric an oriental slant. Saffron is certainly well known and loved all along the northern (ie European) coast of the Mediterranean, and turmeric is barely known there. Turmeric, however, is not only beloved of Indian cooks but it has long held sway, too, in the cuisines of countries fringing the southern and eastern (North African and Arabian) shores of the Mediterranean sea.

And the recent growing consideration of turmeric as a valuable spice in its own right undoubtedly stems from a new British interest in dishes from North African kitchens, notably Morocco and Tunisia.

Faded turmeric is an uninteresting shadow of fresh. So buy in very small quantities, label with the date of purchase, and throw out any remnants six months later.

Saffron is the dried stigma of an autumn flowering crocus, *Crocus sativus* Linnaeus. Hauntingly aromatic, strong, sweet, musky, toasty and sophisticated at its best, it seems also to possess a faint whiff of burning tyres if you breathe its scent too deeply, and there is a disagreeable bitter medicinal edge to its taste if used too generously.

Turmeric, on the other hand, is the rhizome of a plant closely related to ginger, with lily-like leaves and tall, pale spikes of flowers.

Its taste and aroma are pungent yet mild, warm, dense and somehow very earthy – just as beetroot is earthy.

Another marked difference between the two spices is that while saffron is best pounded and added to dishes towards the end of cooking, turmeric does not spoil with hours in the pot.

Because of the temptation for middlemen to adulterate an ingredient that retails for nearly £100 an ounce, saffron is always best bought whole (not powdered in sachets) to ensure it is the real thing.

It makes good sense, on the other hand, to buy turmeric ready ground, and this is how nearly all supplies are sold because the dried rhizome is so hard and exceedingly messy to grind down at home. Once tried, never again. But freshness is important. Just as coffee and Parmigiano cheese lose much of their delicious aromatic qualities very quickly after grinding or grating, so it is with spices.

Faded turmeric is an uninteresting shadow of fresh. So buy in very small quantities, label with the date of purchase, and throw out any remnants six months later.

TURMERIC KEDGEREE

(serves 3-4)

Equally welcome for breakfast, lunch or supper.

350g undyed smoked haddock fillet (preferably thick end for larger flakes); 225g basmati rice; 1 bulb Florentine fennel; (half) teaspoon fennel seeds; generous (half) teaspoon turmeric; 2 bay leaves; 50g butter (plus extra at the end, to taste); 50g sultanas; 1 punnet rape and crease; a small bunch each of parsley and chives; 1 lemon; 2 hard-boiled eggs.

Wash and soak the rice in cold water. Lay the fish in a shallow pan, cutting it in half to fit snugly. Pour on 750ml or so cold water just to cover the haddock. Three-quarters cover the pan and bring to the boil.

Remove from the heat, cover with the lid and leave for 7 minutes. Meanwhile measure out the other ingredients, trim and dice the fennel bulb, chop the herbs and crush the fennel seeds, reserving each ingredient separately.

When the haddock is cooked, remove it with a fish slice to a plate. Skin and flake it as soon as cool enough to handle, cover with an upturned soup plate and keep warm. Bring the fishy liquor back to boiling point and season it lightly with salt, the turmeric powder and bay leaves. Add the soaked and drained rice and cook until done, adding the sultanas for the last few minutes to plump them up.

While the rice cooks, sauté the diced fennel in

25g butter in a flameproof casserole until beginning to frazzle on all sides, about 5 minutes. Reduce the heat. Sprinkle on the fennel seed and plenty of black pepper, then the flaked haddock (and any juices that have collected on the plate) and 25g butter, cut into dice. Do not stir. Cover tightly and leave over a gentle flame for 3-4 minutes more to complete cooking the fennel and ensure the fish is hot.

Drain the rice when it is done. Fluff it with a fork, add the parsley, chives, rape and crease and fork it again. Fold in the buttery fish and fennel. Check seasoning and stir in more diced butter to taste. Garnish with quartered lemon and hard-boiled eggs, and offer a bowl of mango chutney on the side.

HADDOCK & MUSSEL CHOWDER

(serves four as a main dish)

No vivid yellow in this dish, just the pale buff of undyed smoked haddock and the creamier buff of farmed green mussels, flecked with green herbs and tender leek tops.

350g-400g undyed smoked haddock fillet (thick end for preference); 1kg mussels; 350g-400g leeks (trimmed weight); 350g-400g floury potatoes; 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped; 2 bay leaves; a bunch of parsley; several sprigs of lemon thyme; 1 tablespoon lemon juice; 600ml whole milk; unsalted butter.

Scrub the mussels.

Discard any that are damaged or do not close when tapped. Put them into a pan with 200ml boiling water and the lemon juice. Cover tightly and cook for a few minutes, shaking the pan occasionally, until the molluscs have opened. Strain, reserving liquor and mussels separately.

Peel and grate a little potato (so it will dissolve in cooking and thicken the soup); dice the rest. Slice the leeks obliquely into bite-sized pieces. Turn both vegetables for a minute or so in melted butter in a heavy-based saucepan or flameproof casserole.

Add the haddock and parsley to the casserole. Bring back to simmering point and cook, uncovered, for 2 minutes with barely a bubble on the surface. Turn off the heat. Stir in the mussels, cover tightly and leave to stand for 2-3 minutes more to reheat the mussels without toughening them. Check seasoning before serving.

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FOOD AND DRINK



Harvest home: Darina Allen and her dog Poppy among the squashes and pumpkins grown in the gardens of Ballymaloe Cookery School

Monica Mayes

Irish country house cooking

Sue Style finds out why Ballymaloe in County Cork attracts wannabe cooks from all over the world

Chickens scatter in disarray as you approach the muddy, somewhat bumpy drive to Ballymaloe. Saddleback pigs root about and Kerry cows graze peacefully in the field in front of the house. Ducks and geese squabble by the pond. But this bucolic appearance belies the solid professionalism behind Darina Allen's celebrated cookery school in County Cork, Ireland, which attracts students from all over the world.

When Darina married Tim Allen in 1970, they found themselves in a vast, crumbling property with about 100 acres of farmland. It was clear that their early ventures in horticulture were never going to generate enough income to enable them to stay on in the property, far less to develop and invest in it.

The situation, close to Tim's mother's hotel, Ballymaloe House, a few miles from Ballycotton harbour in the heart of rich arable country, not far from Cork, was superb. They had to think of something that would enable them to remain in this wonderful place.

The cookery classes began when mother-in-law Myrtle, herself a cook of considerable reputation, began referring hotel guests down the road to Darina for instruction.

Demonstrations in the early days were held in a converted stable building on Saturday mornings.

A self-taught cook, Darina continued her culinary edu-

cation by attending one of celebrity cook Marcella Hazan's courses in Bologna.

At the end of a week's course, there was, she says, a "blinding flash" as she realised that back home she was blessed with all the necessary ingredients for a successful cookery school and food business: a series of buildings lying idle, first-class raw materials close at hand (shellfish from Ballycotton harbour, Irish beef (Ireland's oldest breed), both endangered and indigenous), chickens and eggs for the school, as well as for sale outside.

There is a further acre of greenhouses where exotic produce such as okra, aubergines, lemon grass, chilies and tomatoes are grown.

The two 12-week courses in the year (January to April and September to December) are designed for aspiring professionals. The foundation is Irish country house cooking, based on the best local produce, much of it organically grown. To this are added strong French and Italian influences and occasional Indian, Thai and Mexican accents.

Graduates have little trouble finding attractive employment afterwards. One spoke to over lunch (prepared by the students) was off to Barbados for the winter season to work as chef in an English household.

Another student (an erstwhile merchant banker turned headhunter from Singapore, who had earmarked some of his earnings to finance the course) was going on to work in a two-

A breakthrough came in 1989 when Darina landed a contract for a television series with RTE in Dublin entitled *Simply Delicious*. Overnight she became a household name and face – a mixed blessing, she says. The school has never looked

Ballymaloe Cookery School was set up in 1983, and since then interest in the school has grown and the programme has been extended to include two residential courses a year, and diverse classes and demonstrations of varying duration.

A breakthrough came in 1989 when Darina landed a contract for a television series with RTE in Dublin entitled *Simply Delicious*.

Overnight she became a household name and face – a mixed blessing, she says. The school has never looked

particular, may be interested in T J Crowley's *The American System of Cookery* published in New York in 1870. Its condition is described as "rather stained, contents foxed but clean" and it costs just £30.

□ Liz Seeger, Kent Wharf, 61 Laburnum Street, London E8 8BD. Tel: +44 171 738 3031, fax: 3783. Parcels are sent overseas, fully insured via Airbridge, UPS or similar.

■ Tasmania is a long way from anywhere but it is hoping to attract visitors there this winter with a food festival. Tasting at the Top runs from June 19 to 21 at Cradle Mountain Lodge, which is on the edge of Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair national park.

Remote it may be, but Tasmania has a good reputation in the southern hemisphere for its food. The festival will include wine and cheese tastings and a gala dinner. Hopefully, there will also be a chance to sample the renowned Tasmanian salmon. The region also produces what it calls – Scots avert your eyes – its own malt whisky.

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star Michelin restaurant in England's West Country. The pay's awful," he grimaced, "but it'll certainly beat banking as a career, and it'll look good on my CV for the next move."

The various demonstrations and practical classes held at intervals throughout the year are aimed at those wishing to brush up their cooking skills in specific areas – pasta, bread, sea-

food, vegetarian food or wild mushrooms, for example. There are also guest appearances by local chefs and celebrities from farther afield.

■ **Ballymaloe Cookery School, Shanagarry, Co Cork, Ireland:** tel +353 21 646 805, fax -353 21 646 805, e-mail: enquiries@ballymaloe-cookery-school.ie. Website: <http://www.ballymaloe-cookery-school.ie>

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EDUCATION

Charitable ties with a fund of history

Both state and private schools can benefit from their links with City cash and wisdom. Simon Targett reports on connections that extend back centuries

A company giving beer money to school kids. It is the sort of action which may alarm parents in this era of alcohol and underage drinking.

Yet the generosity of the Worshipful Company of Brewers, one of London's livery companies, is not all it seems: new pupils at Aldenham, a boarding school at Elstree in Hertfordshire, get only a ceremonial crown.

The coin is a useful historic lesson: a reminder that, as Charles Dallmeyer, the company's clerk, explains, in a bygone era, "boys drank beer because the water was so foul".

It is also a reminder of the historic link between the company and the school, which was founded in 1597 by a London brewer. Across Britain, there is a host of schools with strong ties to City livery companies.

There may be a trend for private companies to take over the management of schools in the state sector, but in fact business leaders have long been involved in the running of some of Britain's top private schools.

Not all the ties are ancient. Sevenoaks, a boarding school in Kent, is one of the oldest lay foundations in England, having been established by a wealthy merchant in 1422. But its bond with the Worshipful Company of Tobacco Pipe Makers and Tobacco Blenders, a livery company re-established in the mid-

1950s, is relatively modern. Most livery company links are age-old, however, and stem from the fact that a rich City businessman, anxious to book his slot in Heaven, was ready to make a charitable bequest to establish a school for the next generation.

Gresham's School at Holt in Norfolk was founded by a City bigwig who left some land for a school in his birthplace, to be administered by the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers.

The company, far from the world of the local chippie, is ranked fourth in the livery company hierarchy - out of more than 100.

It still owns the school, appoints the governing body, and funds scholarships, travel grants for trips to South America, and capital projects: a new theatre, named after poet and old boy W.H. Auden, was funded to the tune of £200,000.

John Arkell, the headmaster, says the link with the fishmongers' company "adds a certain cachet to the school". For a small establishment - just over 500 pupils - it has a long list of famous alumni, including Benjamin Britten; James Dyson, the inventor of the bagless vacuum cleaner; and Christopher Cockerell, the designer of the hovercraft.

Arkell suggests the link "makes us more of a national school rather than just a Norfolk

school", explaining the connection means more pupils come from London than would be normal for a provincial school.

Another advantage is that, as headmaster, he can turn to leading figures within the City for advice. "There is a certain wisdom that comes from a group of people who live and work around the City of London," he says.

This is a view supported by David McMurray, headmaster of Oundle School in Peterborough. His school is tied to the Worshipful Company of Grocers which, like the fishmongers' company, is a long way from a purveyor of fruit and vegetables.

The grocers, who form the governing body, provide "an enormous well of expertise", and they also pay for scholarships and capital projects, last year contributing more than £100,000.

The link - which dates back to 1558, when Sir William Laxton, master of the grocers' company, left money to set up a school within a pony ride's distance of his birthplace - has a further practical benefit. "It gives parents a great deal of confidence to know that a company like the grocers stands behind the school," says McMurray.

When parents are preparing to send their children away for weeks on end and stump up about £14,000 in fees, that can be important.

Another school proud of its links with the grocers' company is Dauntsey's, in Wiltshire. The small school, situated not far from Stonehenge, is tied to the Worshipful Company of Mercers. The grandest livery company.

It was founded by William Dauntsey, a local boy made good who, the century after Dick Whittington, another Mercer, had also made his way to London in the hope of finding fame and fortune.

He found fortune, if not fame, and set up a school in 1542, leaving his land and tenements in London to pay for a school house

and a schoolmaster on a yearly stipend of £10.

Stewart Roberts, the headmaster, jestingly suggests his salary has not, perhaps, kept up with inflation, but the connection with the mercers' company, which helps administer the school, has profited generations of Dauntseys.

Like other schools, Dauntsey's has governors from, or appointed by, the livery company. It gives the head, teachers and pupils access to people beyond their normal orbit.

ests, and controls large endowments from past members.

One is John Colet, who left lands in Stepney, east London, and Buckinghamshire for the foundation of St Paul's School in 1509. Another is John Royston, whose endowment was used to re-establish a school at Abingdon in 1563, after the dissolution of the local abbey ended a school which had stood since 1236.

These two, together with Dauntsey's and nine others, including several state schools, form the mercers' company's cluster of academies.

"It's a bit like a commonwealth," says Howard Truelove, of the mercers. "The heads meet, as do the heads of the IT departments, and we provide tickets so that pupils can go to concerts and art galleries."

Roberts says Dauntsey's has benefited from links with Thomas Telford, a city technology college in Shropshire and one of the country's top comprehensive schools, which is sponsored by the mercers.

The state-funded school, which also gets backing from big companies such as Tarmac, the construction group, has pioneered the use of information technology in the classroom.

"It has been good to pick their brains," says Roberts, who is developing a computer-based learning centre to take Dauntsey's into the new millennium.

At a time when Tony Blair, the prime minister, and the government are encouraging private and state schools "to build bridges", Dauntsey's and Thomas Telford are already doing so, under the auspices of a City livery company which started out as a medieval guild of traders.

And, unusually, it is not just a one-way relationship, with the private school giving everything and getting nothing much in return except several brownie points in the government's good books.



Stewart Roberts: Dauntsey's school appreciates its membership of the Mercers' Company 'cluster'

In Pictures

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MOTORING / PROPERTY

Michael Harvey
goes to the roots
of what we look for
in a new car, and
queries the value
of the road test

If you are reading this column looking for a definitive verdict about the virtues and vices of the alluring saloon shown on the right, look elsewhere. What follows is not a road test. As I see it, the written road test, if not dead, is critically ill with a life-threatening dose of irrelevancy.

Take the new Rover 75. It's handsome like a well-proportioned tallboy is handsome. On paper it is good value too, assuming Rover can have it in showrooms before it needs to replace the 75 in euros (starting price for the basic version will be £18,275). And it comes with quality underwritten by BMW.

In road test terms, however, you may not be convinced. That assumes you need to know the minutiae of what it's like to drive. So you turn to a newspaper or the car magazines.

You might care to take the word of my predecessor, Stuart Marshall: "For me, cars in this size and price class simply do not come more tranquil." Maybe you like the foremen of your juries more funky. "Compared to an Audi A4," wrote Car Magazine, "the Rover has more soul than Otis Redding. [The 75] is a serious result for Rover."

Astonishingly, What Car? reckons the 75, a car unproven over any distance, is the best new car available in Britain. Period. A royal-blue Rover, you would be forgiven for thinking with some irony, is about to become an emblem of success as essential as a graphite-grey BMW. Imagine it: the Germans hoist by their own petard.

Well, not quite. Read between the lines of Auto-car's characteristically exhaustive road test and you get the sense that the 75 manages at best a score draw. Pick up Top Gear, the UK's largest circulation motoring magazine, and that serious result looks



Glam machine: Rover's new 75 puts its best face forward at the Geneva International Motor Show this week

MOTORING

Secrets of wheel appeal

more like a threshing. "The 75 comes last... Sorry Rover, your new 75 isn't up to scratch," Jeremy Clarkson, who else, delivers the coup de grace. "If I were in the market for a car of this type, I'd rather have something else. Anything else."

So who do you believe? A Ferrari-driving television presenter living in the Cossacks, or a junior road tester who counts himself lucky to borrow a Fiat and squat in Clapham? Do you take the word of an extraordinary driver (as many magazine road testers are) or the word of an ordinary person (still a rarity among testers)? Who speaks your language more clearly?

It doesn't really matter. You have probably already decided whether the Rover is for you. And most likely you did so the first time you saw it. Even the most sceptical in the industry acknowledge that the way a car looks makes up at least 60 per cent of the buying decision.

How it drives doesn't make it into the top five.

Affordability, interior features and dealer performance are all more important. Even brand values outperform performance.

How do you road test those?

It is a dilemma that is only going to get worse for road testers as manufacturers exploit further and further the economies of scale offered by platform-sharing technology.

There is a broad misunderstanding about platforms: the modern equivalent of a chassis. It is not a big piece of pressed steel that dictates a car's size and shape. It is a collection of invisible components designed to be compatible with many cars, but only one set of production tools.

That will then define a car's appeal is not how it goes and stops, steers and rides but who makes it, and what it looks and feels like outside and in to the individual, the very factors a road test can never evaluate.

Sure there's a big difference between how an Audi TT and a Golf drive. But environmental pressures and the amount that electronics can tailor a car to its driver's preferences will in future limit that difference.

So where do the road testers go from here? A government-sponsored programme hosted by Nissan and Cranfield Technology School, with the excruciating acronym of Pluto, is attempting to provide a framework for quantifying "attractiveness".

"Appeal" would be a better word since Pluto is attempting to sniff out how we react to specific interior features and not exterior appearance.

Road testers are a keen bunch and they will fight back, pushing cars to ever more ludicrous speeds in search of that defining handling flaw, but the writing is on the wall.

If they cannot agree about the Rover, a unique vehicle in almost every way, how will they cope when VW and the others finally reach their goal of three basic recipes served up with an endless variety of sauces?

The answer, as this column will attempt to prove, is to concentrate less on driving, more on cars. As the invisible bits of a vehicle become more mundane, the bits you see and feel, and the reason they are there, become ever more complex.

They need illuminating, and explaining. It is more important to know whether you will like a car than whether it will outperform your neighbours.

After all, there's a good chance it is exactly the same vehicle under the skin.

the scenario accepted by a number of analysts that, within 10 years, there will be just six global mega-groups (two each in the US, Europe and Japan). It is not unreasonable to suggest there will be just 18 basic cars in the world before too long.

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Bicycle benefits can help keep the burglars at bay

Michael J. Woods looks at the effect of cycle paths on house prices

To discover whether a cycle path pushes up or drags down neighbouring property values, Sustrans, an engineering charity, commissioned a survey into the effect of cycle paths on house prices.

Sustrans is co-ordinating the implementation of an 8,000-mile national cycle network in the UK by 2000. The routes chosen for it run through as many towns and cities as possible and within five miles of at least 20m people.

About half of the national cycle network routes are on traffic calmed roads while the remainder use a raft of different tracks and trails, including forest roads, canal tow paths and converted disused railway lines.

Sustrans employed an independent surveyor to take four case studies, all disused railways - the Bristol-Bath path, the Cuckoo Trail from Hereford to Pylegate in East Sussex, and the Barnstaple to Petrockstowe section of the Tarka Trail in Devon - and, through a questionnaire survey and interviews, to look at the effects on residential and agricultural properties.

The findings indicated that the more expensive the property in urban areas, the more likely it was that the price would be increased by the proximity of a cycle route, possibly by as much as 10 per cent in places such as York, where the ambience of the path gives character to its surroundings.

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path was almost universally welcomed. Unless taken over rapidly by nature, the dereliction of a disused railway attracts a range of unwanted uses, the worst often being motorcycle scrambling and car breaking.

Many do become informal routes, especially for dog walkers, and play areas for children. Conversion is generally welcomed because of the order it brings and most neighbours felt that cycle paths were attractive and had a positive impact on an area.

The elderly, in particular, were often pleased to live near a path because of the interest and activity it brought. Their enjoyment of the constant passage of walkers and cyclists outweighed any noise problems.

In fact, fewer than a fifth of the respondents overall were upset by noise and when it came to privacy,

even a suggestion that the provision of a cycle path reduced crime. Examples included quiet closes deserted by commuters during the day. Here the activity from the path was felt to act as a deterrent to would-be burglars.

Farmers and landowners were also asked for their views on how a cycle path might affect their land and its value. Most interviewees complained that the national cycle network would attract more people into the countryside and this was seen as likely to cause trespass.

When pressed, however, they conceded that they had not seen a dramatic increase in trespass, while some saw a new, clearly indicated route, on which it was impossible to get lost, as a way of reducing trespass.

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Most interviewees complained that the national cycle network would attract more people into the countryside

almost three-quarters said that a path had little or no effect.

The ready access that a cycle path would bring to the rear of a property, however, clearly raised the question of security and the possibility that the National Cycle Network might compromise the security of some properties.

Trespass, it was found, was almost never a problem but burglaries and vandalism were thought to be a different matter. Some of those surveyed thought that a path had brought an increase in crime but generally they lived in areas where the crime rate was high and a direct correlation difficult to substantiate.

Those living in more remote rural areas generally did not associate a cycle path with crime. There was

some farmers thought that the thickness of hedgerows and the apparently unkempt look of some of the cycle paths was a problem. Some paths can also be used by horses and, in these instances, farmers saw it as a distinct advantage to live adjacent or close to the network.

There were insufficient land transactions during the survey period to form a view of the effect of the national cycle network on rural land prices. But the feedback from those who had lived close to one of the four trials for some time was that it was not as deleterious as they had feared and that the benefits outweighed the problems.

A Sustrans' report Cycle Routes and their Neighbours will be available from April; call 0117-929 0888.

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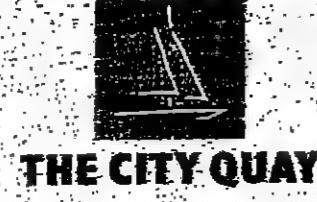
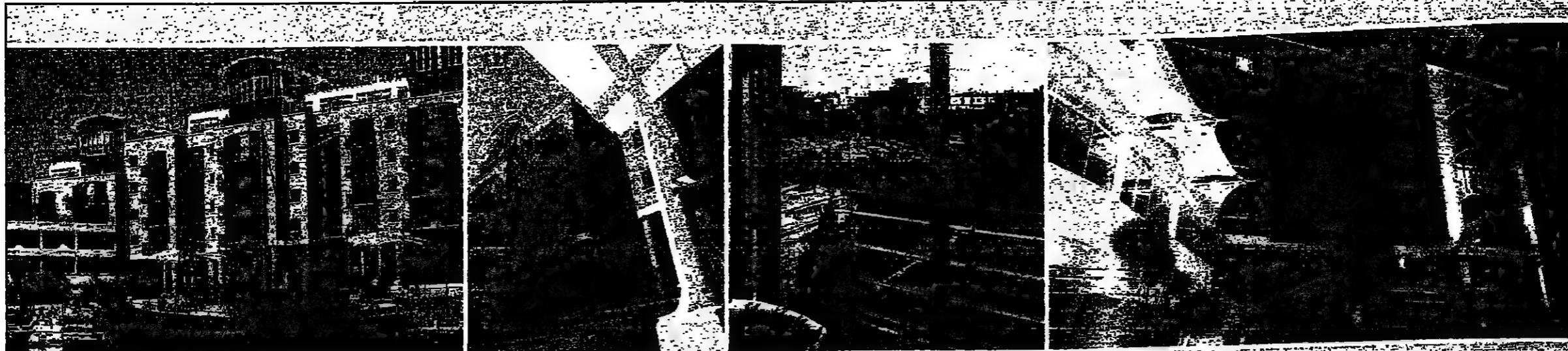
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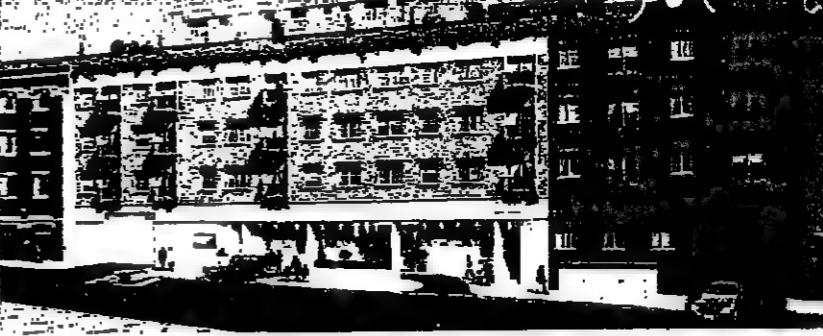
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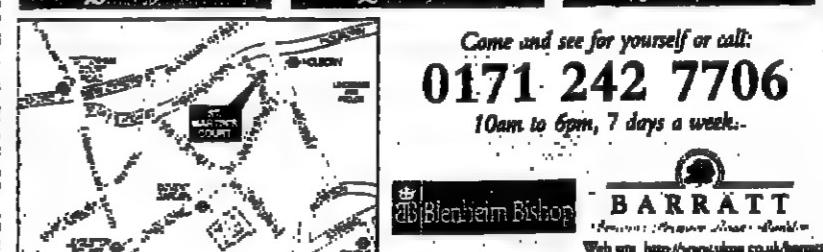


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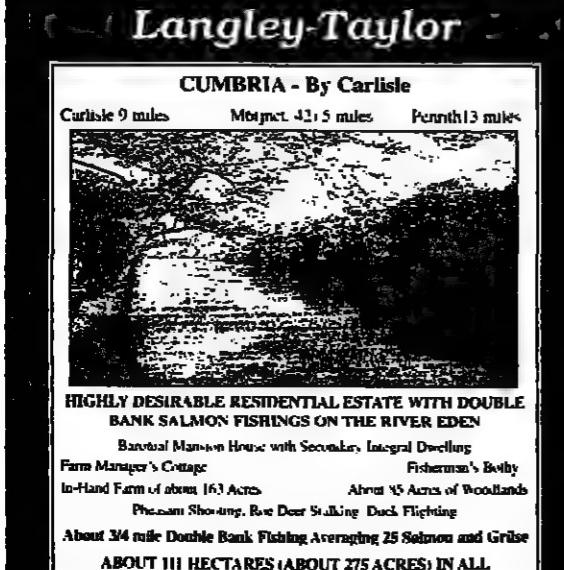
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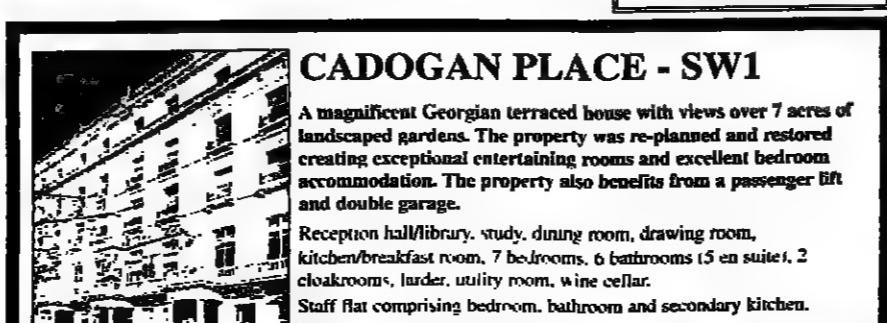
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PROPERTY

New quids on the block

Anne Spackman finds some smart flat-owners are demanding better service from their landlords

A new breed of flat-owner is moving into the many smart new developments which have recently been completed in London.

These are people who are not used to accepting poor service and they are starting to make their voices heard.

Sir Ralph Halpern, former chairman of the Burton Group and chairman of the residents' association at Chelsea Harbour, where he owns a flat, is at the forefront of this trend. He has been involved in three recent cases in which he and fellow residents have drastically reduced their service charges.

In one instance the block's annual insurance premium of £40,000 a year was halved after residents were allowed to obtain their own quotes.

In the second, resident involvement reduced the cost of a major construction contract by £250,000. In the third case a proposed increase of more than 25 per cent in the annual service charge was reduced to single figures after the residents intervened.

"The law is stacked in favour of the landlord," says Sir Ralph. "If leaseholders are to improve things, they have to get involved."

Typical of the treatment meted out to large numbers of flat-owners today is the experience of one woman who has just sold her one-bedroom flat in a converted period property in Kensington.

Her managing agents were so slow to put in an insurance claim for a leak in the roof - which, itself, had only just been replaced - that the insurers refused to pay out. The leak caused dry rot and the bill for repairing both was a cool £200 for each of the eight flats.

Like hundreds of flat-owners she ended up paying the bill because she did not have time for a legal wrangle. With a buyer in the wings, she could not afford to jeopardise her sale with a dispute over service charges.

Such practices may become less commonplace, however, not only because of changes in the nature of flat ownership, but also because the government is preparing to act.

It says in its recent consultation paper on leasehold reform that it wishes to give flat-owners the right to manage their own

blocks. In addition it proposes tighter controls over the activities of managing agents.

One of the responses the government will have received to its consultation paper by yesterday's deadline comes from Sir Ralph, who is also chairman of the resident management company at Kensington Green, where he has a property interest. (Such a company has the power to appoint and control its own managing agents, whereas a residents' association is a representative body.)

He has sent the government two responses, because - like many others - he feels it should separate the issues of property management, which can

be solved swiftly, and the issue of property ownership, which is more contentious.

Sir Ralph points out the fundamental contradiction at the heart of the problem, by which a managing agent takes his orders from the landlord, but provides services to the flat-owners who are responsible for paying the bills. Not only is there no incentive for the service to be good; with managing agents charging a fee for overseeing contracts, the more it costs, the more money they get.

He wants leaseholders to be given four legal rights: the right to manage their blocks; the right to information about what is being done with their money; the right to information on proposed future expenditure, in addition to annual accounts; and the right to influence the choice of contrac-

tors and have their choice upheld where appropriate. "He who pays the piper should call the tune," he points out.

His experience is echoed in other blocks where the residents have organised an effective committee and elected an active chairman. David Harris, chairman of the management company at Hornton Court in Kensington, has also halved his block's insurance premium and improved the cover.

When his block was due for internal redecoration the flat-owners decided their own budget and put the contract out to tender. "If you have a major investment in your property and it is your home you care very much

"You need them to be involved in order that good decisions are made. There are not many resident management companies with former captains of industry as their chairmen."

■ Do not appoint the cheapest agent.

Most agents charge an annual service fee to each flat plus a fee for managing specific contracts. JSSPinnacle, managing agents for Kensington Green, Chelsea Harbour and Hornton Court, charge between £200 and £600 per flat.

"Cheapest is dearest in the long run," says David Harris of Hornton Court. "We have a deliberate policy of paying a higher fee than most. It means we can get the best people and we can work them very hard."

■ Decide what level of services you want.

Owen Inskip, chief executive of JSSPinnacle, is one of the new generation of managing agents trying to offer a pro-active service, which focuses on residents' problems and tries to solve them.

In one Bloomsbury block he has suggested changing the role of the porter, whom the residents felt was poor value for money. In another block he has suggested the huge £100,000 annual cost for minor repairs would be better spent on employing some full-time staff, who could also offer residents a handy-man service.

Inskip has just taken over the managing job at Kensington Green. When he saw the first service charge accounts due to be sent out they were headed "tenant statement".

"I threw them in the bin," he said. "It's such an insult. These are people with flats worth hundreds of thousands of pounds."

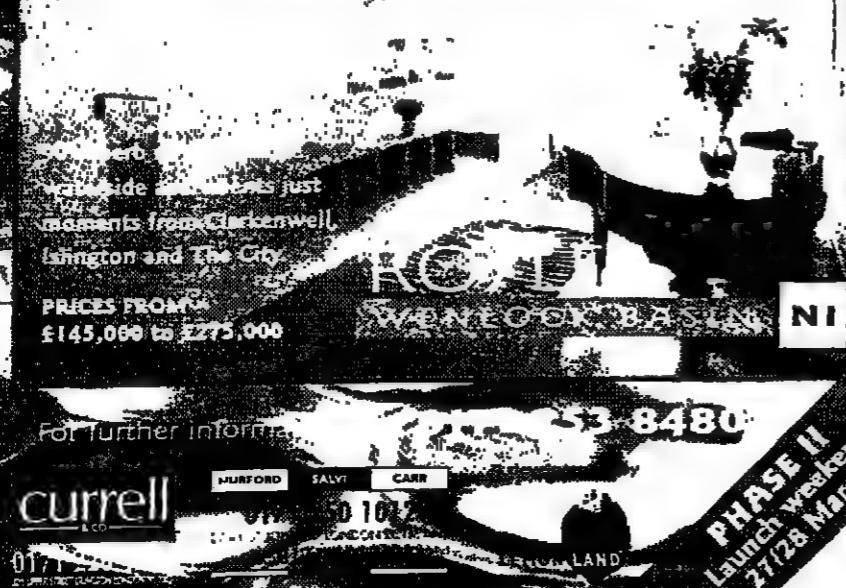
He believes enlightened landlords and residents have the same aims: to see the property well run. But what of the many unenlightened still in the business?

The government recognises in its consultation paper that poor management lies behind most leaseholders' attempts to buy (enfranchise) their freehold. If it bands over management control to flat-owners, not only will that problem be resolved, but the incentive for exploitative freeholders to own property will significantly diminish.

New lease of life: Sir Ralph Halpern says the law is stacked in favour of the landlord

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GARDENING / PROPERTY

My arboreal trinity gets us out of a hole

A dead sycamore offered an opportunity, and Robin Lane Fox was quick to grasp it

When a man gets old, said Dr Johnson, he starts planting trees. For many years, a particularly large and unwanted sycamore stood in what became the main parking area of my Oxford college. Last summer, it turned out to be rotten from the middle of the trunk upwards and after one day with the chainsaw, we were rid of it.

The death of a sycamore is not, in my view, an event to lament, although a few laments were heard from other members of the college, several of whom, in their academic wisdom, had clearly believed it to be an oak. Replanting always creates problems; so many arguments seem to be raised against placing a tree in the position where another had previously stood.

In a conservation area, trees are everybody's business and no sooner had the sycamore gone to the bonfire than the city council proposed alternatives: semi-mature trees at prices about £350. The trouble with the suggestions was that we have a fine Davidia already and I doubt if it would like to be moved at the height it has reached. An Indian Chestnut would be far too big; and a Catalpa is much too late to come into leaf and is anyway well represented in Oxford, one of the best having dignified the front quadrangle of Trinity College and flowered regularly in the recent hot summers.

It seemed better to take guidance from what we have already and work out a scheme from local detail. The great 16th century landscapers used to call it "consulting the genius of the place".

One of the college geniuses in this particular area is undoubtedly a well-developed Ginkgo. Ginkgoes grow vertically into the most convenient shape and are widely used outside Britain as

street trees which can cope with quite exceptional pollution. Trees which can flourish in Manhattan or central Seoul can surely cope with the yearly invasion of parents in estate cars, dropping off the new batch of hopeful undergraduates with their stereo sets and clothes stuffed in black bin liners. I have decided to match the existing Ginkgo with a second specimen at the opposite corner of the lawn in question.

Placed between the Ginkgoes, which tree could cope with the college croquet and the nearby bicycle racks? My own preference has been for an oak and careful discussions with a great oak expert, James Harris of Mallett Court Nursery, Curry Mallet, Taunton, persuaded me to opt for the chestnut-leaved Quercus castaneifolia. This seldom-planted relation of the tough Turkey oak was introduced from the Caucasus in 1846, but its shiny dark green leaves are not often seen in English gardens. Harris recommended the more upright form, Green Spire, which would be less likely to molest the bicycles and cast excessive shade in the 22nd century.

Anyone who chooses a tree for a site with buildings will know that other experts' views will need to be taken into account. Writers in several publications try to estimate the eventual root-run of mature trees, although the exercise is still guesswork because it appears to be based on specimens which have not yet matured. The most authoritative research papers rate the root-spread of an oak as second only to a plane and in the face of such tentative expertise, oaks would not survive the apprehension of those who are entrusted with the safety of the college's underground cabling.

To contrast with the two upright Ginkgoes, we need some- thing with a more rounded head in a variety which has not yet been assessed for far-running underground tentacles.

At this point, I thankfully

remembered the bop hornbeam.

This easy tree, *Ostrya carpinifolia*, is also unusual in British gardens, although it has been seen there since 1734. At maturity it reaches about 30ft high in a pleasantly rounded shape, unlike the lower-branched ordinary hornbeam. Its toothed leaves go a good yellow in autumn, and in spring it covers itself with long green-yellow catkins. There are few *Ostryas* in Oxford and so we have opted for another - a companion for the Ginkgoes.

Once you have an idea which practical experts frustrate, you cannot resist applying it elsewhere. On the opposite side of my new threesome lies a sunken lawn which has long been eyed by imaginative colleagues as the eventual site for an evergreen student maze.

A student maze is like an ordi-

nary maze except that it would be reserved for those pupils who have made the worst muddle of their term's work and could then be loosed into the garden labyrinth in order to find their bewildered way to the centre and be given an appropriate punishment by one of their tutors, dressed as the Minotaur.

We are still considering the maze as a sort of academic prison, but meanwhile I have put a full-bloodied *Quercus castaneifolia* to one side of the preferred site where its roots will not interfere with the cabling system for the college and render my colleagues powerless after another 30 years. We have followed the usual rules of deep preparation and have now planted the three specimens in question, bought in healthy sizes from Landford Trees, Landford Lodge, Salisbury, Wiltshire. They cost a fraction of the council's suggested price range of £100-£250.

All three trees will outlast me and possibly even this newspaper. There is an odd combination of responsibility and recklessness when planting trees among old buildings where they will still be standing in 60 to 100 years. One half of the brain tells you that you will not live to see the results and so the possible matter of root-runs is not worth worrying about. The other side says that people will be thanking or cursing you for these choices long after anything which you write on any normal college subject will be of any practical interest.

I think that responsibility has triumphed over recklessness, although nobody knows if *Ostryas* will also usurp the wiring for the entire array of academic computers in the vicinity. We are all getting older, but if you, too, are facing the problem of tree planting, I recommend the particular trinity with which we have ended up. Whatever the result, it will have to be better than a plain old sycamore with its dreary leaves and unwelcome shower of seeds and seedlings into every surrounding bed.

Buyers might look far and wide for top quality Georgian houses. London's Georgian terraces, for example, are mostly made of yellow brick or stucco, designed to hide poor construction.

The grand terrace houses in

and around the New Town area of Edinburgh, however, are rightly honoured with World Heritage status and are solid dwellings built of stone. For elegant architecture allied to sophisticated town planning Edinburgh's only competitor is Bath, also a World Heritage site.

It was built in 1829 at the end

of the Georgian era, and is more

spectacular than most Georgian houses in Edinburgh. The hall is unusually wide and there is a

fine glass cupola above the (original) staircase and plaster cornices, marble chimneypieces and an Aga in the kitchen (bliss in winter mornings).

"Some walls are 8ft thick,"

Macpherson adds.

The market has been fizzing but there are still superb Georgian houses for sale at mouthwatering prices

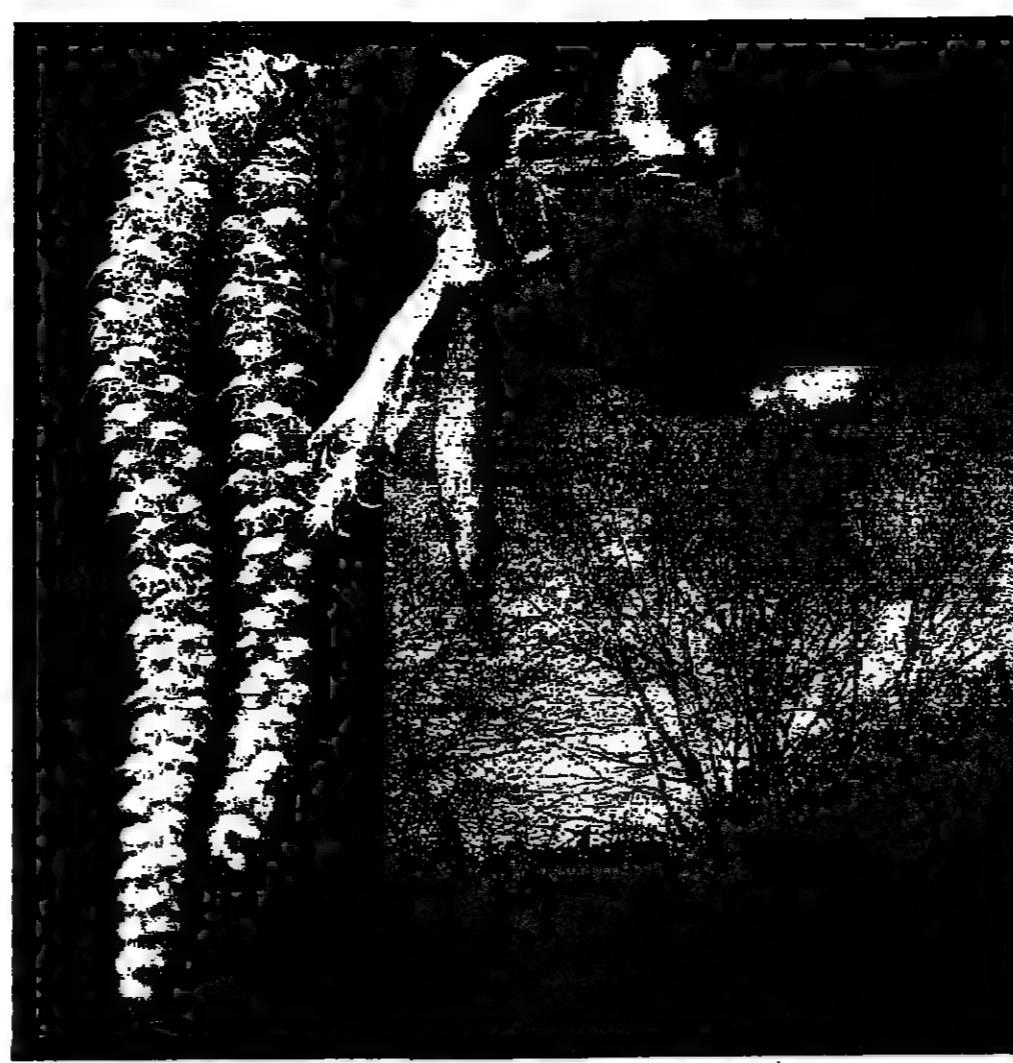
The sloping garden has a soft cascade running its length, with a pump to take the water up again. At the back is a gate into the private 11-acre Regent Gardens, for residents' use.

The other stunning house is 6 Lynedoch Place, the home of painter Jack Vettriano, who started life as a miner, taught himself to paint and now produces pictures of sultry sensuality and glamorous faithlessness.

Vettriano has refurbished the house boldly, giving it strong colours but buff and beige curtains, all to contrast with the greenery outside.

Also included in the sale is the mews house. Agent Rettie (0131-230 1460) asks for offers over £440,000.

Among other good properties for sale are flats at Heriot Row for offers over £235,000 through Rettie and at 30 Royal Circus for offers over £160,000 through Brodies, which expects it to sell for significantly more - and to rent. If an investor buys it, for about £15,000 a year.



The round-headed *Ostrya carpinifolia* covers itself with long green-yellow catkins in spring

ON THE MOVE GERALD CADOGAN

Big capital gains from solid Georgian homes

Buyers might look far and wide for top quality Georgian houses. London's Georgian terraces, for example, are mostly made of yellow brick or stucco, designed to hide poor construction.

The grand terrace houses in and around the New Town area of Edinburgh, however, are rightly honoured with World Heritage status and are solid dwellings built of stone. For elegant architecture allied to sophisticated town planning Edinburgh's only competitor is Bath, also a World Heritage site.

The market in Edinburgh has been fizzing for the past two years but there are still superb Georgian houses for sale at mouthwatering prices.

A strong financial sector, urban renewal in Leith, Edinburgh's port, and a growing awareness of the spectacular value of Edinburgh's houses as places to live a civilised life have all helped to power prices.

They rose by up to 30 per cent in 1998, says Mark Atkinson of solicitor Brodies; houses sold at substantial premiums (sometimes 25 per cent) to their base prices. (In Scotland, agents and solicitors who handle 85 per cent of turnover through the Edinburgh

Solicitors' Property Centre in George Street, ask for "offers over" a base figure.)

But the strongest push for higher prices comes from the impending Scottish parliament. Although the number of Members of the Scottish Parliament will be small, plenty of consultants, lobbyists, spin-doctors, mandarins and secretaries will need to buy or rent at all levels of the market. Prices that had already been rising before the Labour party's general election victory in May 1997, says Atkinson, switched into high gear after the referendum on Scottish devolution in September 1997 and have not stopped since.

Although rental yields have dropped as a result of the higher prices, he predicts a rosy future for Edinburgh. Tony Ferriani of agent Rettie agrees, saying that the parliament will make Edinburgh a true capital city again.

One outstanding house new on the market is 8 Carlton Terrace, part of William Playfair's 1821 Calton Hill scheme in the West

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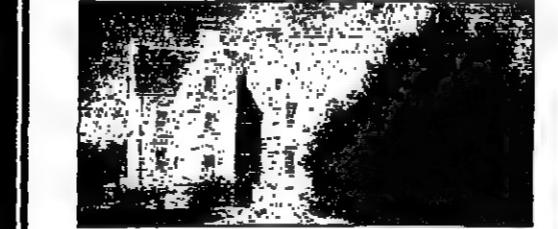
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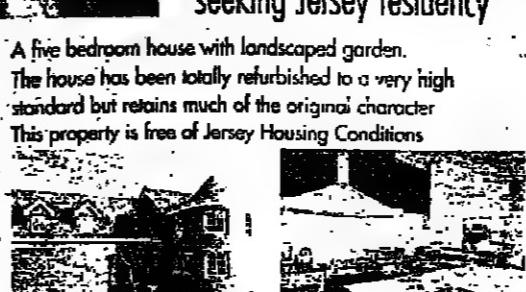
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TRAVEL

Where Big Men and boys try to catch Big Fish

Nicholas Woodsworth and his family were completely hooked by Norway's Lofoten islands

On the island of Vestvagoy, about 125 miles above the Arctic Circle, we topped a rise in the road and came to a sudden, astounded halt.

"Aaah..." I said. "Ooh la la..."

Jany, my wife, said: "No words seemed adequate to describe the beauty of the scene that lay below. Like a series of Matterhorns, the jagged peaks of Norway's Lofoten archipelago rose straight up from bays of crystal-clear water and tropical-style, white-sand beaches. It was exotic. It was bizarre. It was as if the tourist boards of Switzerland and Jamaica had, in some fit of madness, decided to merge their resources."

"Well, Simon!" I said. "What do you think of that?"

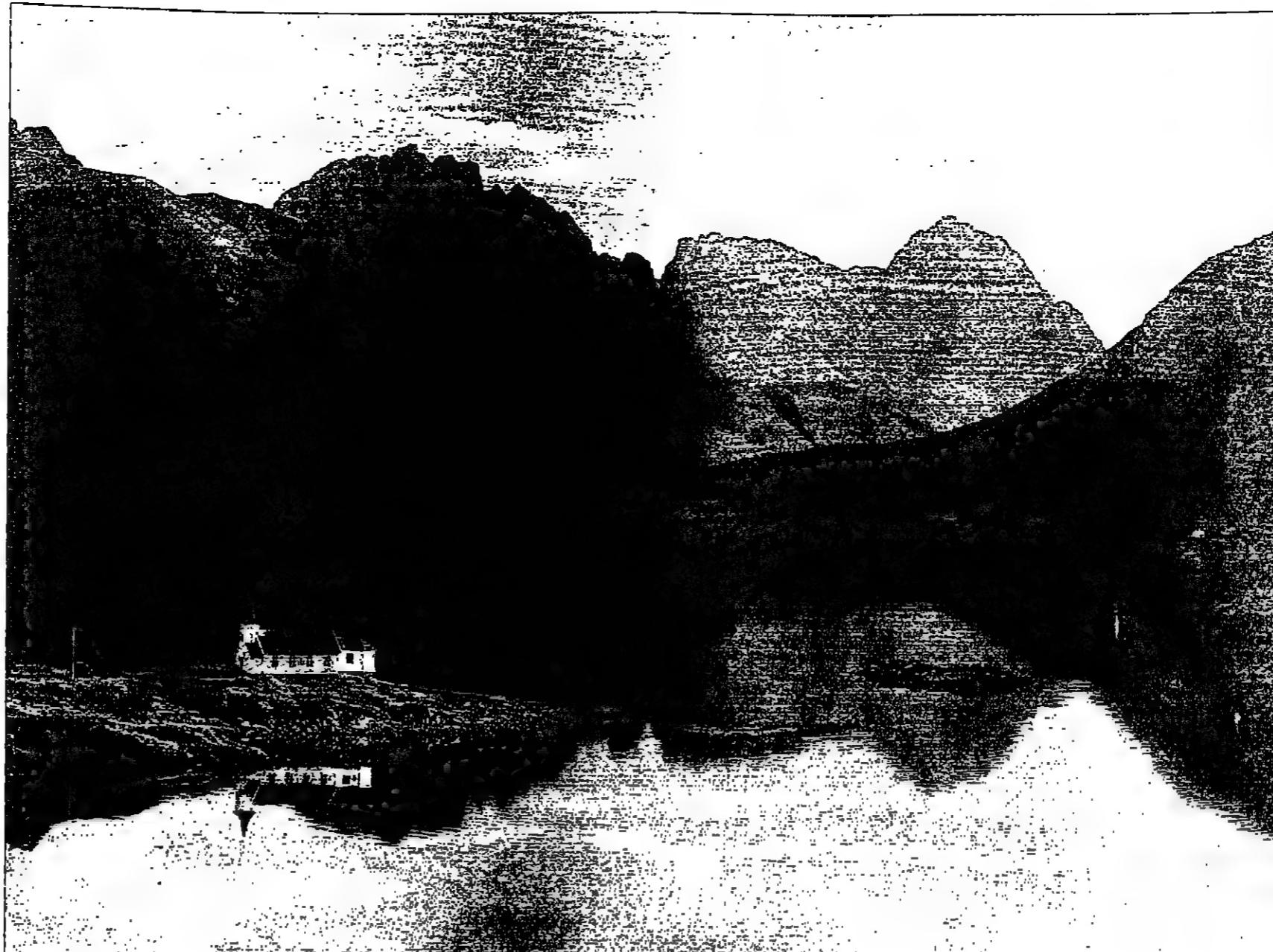
Normally, Simon is as ready with a breezy "Cool!" as any 16-year-old boy - it covers every situation from skateboarding to MTV to occasionally mollifying one's parents.

But this time there was only silence from the back seat of the car. Then Simon, my son, lifted his absorbed gaze from the innards of a capacious, packed-to-bursting fishing-tackle box. The impossible landscape outside his window might not have existed. "Have you seen my Mister Twister?" he asked.

For those who, mercifully, are unfamiliar with them, a Mister Twister is a soft, slimy green silicon worm with a flat, curved tail. Tied to the end of a fishing line it is meant, I believe, to imitate a leech, and is particularly effective in catching such northern fish as pike and walleye. Over numerous summers, as we have fled the heat and crowds of Provence for family holidays in cool, green, northern destinations, Simon has amassed a good number of Mister Twisters. Now he seemed to have mislaid them.

No matter. He had a dozen other kinds of lures as well. Wherever he goes with us, Simon makes sure he brings along his collapsible rod and enough tackle to equip an international marlin fishing competition. He is the keenest fisherman I have ever met. If you took him to the driest corner of the Kalahari Desert he would still be thinking about fish.

Down we drove in brilliant sun through green hay-fields dotted with red wooden barns and farmhouses. Living on the same latitude as the treeless wastes of central Greenland and northern



"Like a series of alpine Matterhorns, the jagged peaks of Norway's Lofoten archipelago rose straight up from bays of crystal-clear water and tropical-style, white-sand beaches"

Alaska, this was an astonishing and unsuspected landscape - rural, fertile, well tended and long inhabited.

Tractors mowed their way through high grass. Herds of cows and sheep grazed in tidy pastures. High-spirited colts galloped in fenced paddocks. All the way to the little fishing port of Ballstad, Jany and I were aching and oh-lease-ing at the lassiness of it all. It was only on arrival, though, that we realised the real lassiness of the Lofotens lay not in the land, but in the surrounding sea.

Centuries before Newfoundland's Grand Banks fishery was discovered, Norwegian fishermen were coming north to the Lofoten

islands, the richest cod-fishing grounds in the world. And for that, they can thank the Gulf Stream.

It is that celebrated warm-water current which attracts vast numbers of cod from the chilly Barents Sea to the Lofoten spawning grounds each January. It is that same current which provides the islands' mild, un-Arctic-like climate and keeps them ice-free and above freezing-point even in mid-winter. And it is that current, too, which allows tourists like me to enjoy the pleasures of *rorbu* living.

So numerous were the fishermen who came north to take part in the Lofoten's warm-water winter fishing that in the 13th cen-

tury a certain far-seeing King Oystein ordered the building of the first *rorbu*, or wooden fisherman's cabin. Constructed along the rocky shoreline - many actu-

ally sit out over the water on stilts - they proved more cosy than sleeping under fishing boats up-turned on the beach. While

fishermen today are perfectly happy sleeping in boats left in the water, the right side up, their cabins have become the favourite form of lodgings for visitors.

Most splendid of all about our *rorbu* in Ballstad, at least from Simon's point of view, was the

Jany and I, on the other hand, were content just to gaze. This certainly was not Provence. Along the Mediterranean coast where we live, even the idea of a quaint fishing village is laughable - quaintness has long vanished. Villages have turned into crowded resorts, and even fish these days are rare. But in Ballstad, cod-liver oil remains more sought-after than sun-tan oil - tucked beneath towering peaks, its entire life revolves around its bobbing boats, busy wharfs, and the age-old hunt for fish.

All this, of course, was the very stuff of life to Simon. How better to spend one's life than fishing on a dock where the sun never sets? Two o'clock in the morning

found Simon casting a lurid pink rubber minnow into the waters of the port with considerable success. It all went well until, through the open door of a warehouse on the wharf, he discovered tons of thousands of dried codfish stacked neatly on pallets like so many cords of firewood.

Each was 3ft long or more. Suddenly, the fish Simon had so proudly been hauling in were only worthless tidbits. His eyes glazed over and, wordless, he looked at me and pointed far out to sea. It was useless, I knew, to argue.

The next day found us boarding the Wenche, a sturdy charter boat, with a dozen other deep-sea aspirants. Most were parents with their children, but among them were three middle-aged German sportsmen. They looked like commandos setting out on a dangerous mission. They wore camouflage gear. They had knives and chronometers. Their rods and reels were competition-class and expensive. Their faces predatory. These were Big Men out to catch Big Fish.

But in the end they caught nothing at all. While they stood in the bows jiggling empty water, the youngsters in the stern, using borrowed handlines, were hauling up leviathans.

With 150ft of line out, Simon got hooked on the bottom. That, at least, was my initial surmise. So great was the weight he was pulling at. But together, hauling hand over hand, we slowly dragged up the silver jigger and the three books that lay on the line's end. Three gigantic coalfish, one on each hook, rose reluctantly to the surface. Weighed together once on deck, they totalled more than 50lb.

The sportsmen were jealous, their hooks vacant, their lines slack.

"Well, Simon," I said once again. "What do you think of that?"

He looked around at the sunny Arctic sea and the distant peaks and the red-painted *rorbu* scattered along the shore. But most of all, eyes wide, he looked at his three fish. This time he had a ready answer.

"Cool," he said.

■ Nicholas Woodsworth flew to Norway with Scandinavian Airlines, tel: 0845-807 2772. His trip to the Lofoten Islands was organised by Scandinavian Travel Service, 2 Eversham Mews, Eltham Road, London SE1 0HN, tel: 0171-559 6666.

■ Information on the islands may be obtained from the Norwegian Tourist Board, Charles House, 5 Lower Regent Street, London SW1Y 4LR, tel: 0171-839 6255. In the US call -212 335 9700.

SKIING ARNIE WILSON

Quebec – a snow-go-go area

Every winter skier on both sides of the Atlantic are urged to pray for snow. The more the better - except when, in an exceptional year such as this, it may end in disaster.

There is a fine line between skiing on truly dangerous slopes and "fantastic" skiing conditions. The problem in recent weeks is that we have had both.

During the tragic events in Galtür, Austria, I was on the other side of the Atlantic, in eastern Canada, enjoying good, well-groomed snow and blue skies.

In Canada, our trouble was the bitter temperature. The Quebecers' way of coping with cold winters is to enjoy them - but we took some convincing.

A howling wind and sub-zero temperatures greeted us as, reluctantly, we left the warm cocoon of our minibus and scuttled for the front door of the Château Mont St Anne. Mont St Anne is the largest ski mountain in eastern Canada and is only 40km from Quebec City. It has an impressive night skiing facility, which we were invited to try. *Non, merci*, recalling the words of the Québécois poet Gilles Vigneault - "my country is not a country, it is winter" - we were anxious enough about day skiing in these temperatures.

My only previous experience of skiing in Quebec had been one of the coldest weeks of my life. Even seemingly glorious sunny days can send out the wrong sig-

nals. In January, a blue-sky day in Quebec can be brutally cold. This time I had brought extra thermal underwear, bulky gloves and a suede Hors La Loi face mask - purchased during my previous visit to help me survive.

The next day did indeed dawn cold, but as the week unfolded, temperatures became distinctly kinder. I abandoned my thick underwear and my face mask stayed tucked down the front of my ski suit.

"Once you have survived January and early February," explained one Quebecer, "you are normally

This time I had brought extra thermal underwear, bulky gloves and a suede face mask - purchased last time to help me survive

through the really cold temperatures and it can be quite spring-like."

I was Scandinavians who introduced skiing to this wintry place. A plaque in the local museum relates the story thus: "His name is A. Birch. He comes from Norway. A strapping fellow, clothed in a frock-coat and a fur cap. Beneath ankle boots, his skis are 9ft long."

"A single pole rests in his hand, and, on a cold February day in 1879, when he enters Quebec City, sliding on his long wooden runners, he creates a sensation. He has just covered the distance

from Montreal to Quebec in 45 hours and 35 minutes. It had only numbers, and here and there these remain). La 42 is a steep, non-stop mogul field that runs from top to bottom - more than 2,000 vertical feet of bumps.

Now try to ski it in one go; better to pause now and then admire the view. On La Gagnon, our guide, Maxime Soucy, whose wide, sweeping, carving turns monopolised almost the entire trail, stopped to point out the remarkable view of the northern shore of the ever-widening St Lawrence. It resembled a tropical coastline with islands of ice instead of coral.

Our final port of call was Stoneham, newly acquired by Resorts of the Canadian Rockies, the portfolio of ski areas owned by Charlie Locke, whose flagship is Lake Louise.

Only 20 minutes from Quebec City, Stoneham, with 300 acres of terrain spread across four mountains, claims to be the third largest resort in the province, and Locke has multi-million dollar expansion plans.

His first lieutenant, John Shea, says: "We're really thrilled to have acquired Stoneham. It's a really pretty spot with great potential, and we're looking forward to improving the product."

There are plans for a joint lift pass covering Mont St Anne, Le Massif, Stoneham, and a fourth resort in the Quebec City area, Le Relais.

The company is chasing

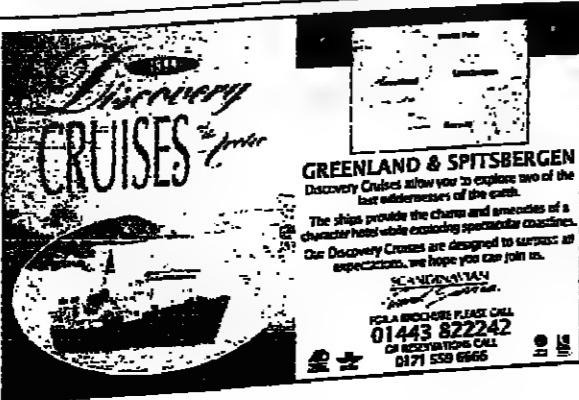
the US market, particularly Boston, New York and Washington. "There are 50m people within an hour or so's flying time of Montreal," says Shea. "That's exciting."

■ Arnie Wilson's visit was organised by Destination Québec, Suite 154, 4th Floor, 33-37 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0BS. Tel: 0171-233 8011. E-mail: DESTQUEBEC@sol.com. He flew from London to Montreal with Air Canada; reservations 0990-247226.



"The local man danced rings round me."

"Up there for thinking" he said pointing to his head and "Down there for dancing" he said pointing to his nimble feet."



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TRAVEL

Blow that French horn

Jill James opens two pages on France with a visit to a village that hosts top jazz stars every summer

Under modern yellow awnings trimmed with red, on a muggy, buggy evening, the sounds of traditional jazz drift across the air.

The French village is bursting at the seams. Every legitimate parking place is taken. Even the presence of the *gendarmerie*, out in force, does not deter French drivers from trying to leave their cars almost anywhere. They would park on top of each other if they could.

Enthusiasts from what seems like every French *département* have come with their children, dogs, bicycles, tents and caravans to spend a few days in Marciac, in armagnac-drinking Gers in south-west France, for what has become one of the main events in the jazz calendar.

Just how a small and insignificant Gascon village with a population of only 1,200 came to host one of Europe's best-regarded jazz festivals is a story in itself.

It was the brainchild of Jean-Louis Guillauhamon, director of the festival and mayor of Marciac. He has also been responsible for initiating a full-time jazz programme in the local high school, of which he is headmaster.

Some years ago he was told that the village was no longer viable – in effect, that it was dying. Guillauhamon says: "There was not much in Marciac. No roads, no industry – our history was not really important. We had to do something."

That something was the jazz festival, which now attracts some of the biggest names in Europe and the US.

"It has taken over 20 years," says Guillauhamon. "You have to love jazz and the culture. You have to have a strong village and a strong area to do this. Five hundred people from the area give their time free during the festival. The organisation is completely different from any other jazz event."

Last year Marciac was named a *Site Majeur* and granted a subsidy by regional and national government. "Still," says Guillauhamon, "of the of the FF10m [£1m] budget, 10 per cent comes from public aid, 20 per cent from sponsors and the rest [a whopping 70 per cent] from ticket sales."

I can vouch for the ticket sales.

The night I was there the main marquee, which holds more than 5,000 people, was jam-packed for some of the great names: the Jones Brothers, Milt Jackson, Johnny Griffin...

The music is piped to satellite tents around the main arena where thousands more are eating, drinking, meeting and greeting. Back in the town square, hundreds are listening to lesser names with just as much enthusiasm – and at no cost. Jazz there, throughout the 10 days and nights of the festival, is completely free.

As yet another quartet strikes up, the stalls and shops which surround the bandstand are doing a roaring trade. You can buy balloons, hats, sausages and wine, wooden African carvings, bags and leather belts, candy floss, *frites* and *foie gras*. I am introduced to a drink which is a mixture of beer and armagnac – a combination that does nothing for either drink and, at FF25 a bottle, is hardly cheap. Much better to drink local wine.

All this must make the village sound like a global bazaar but, for all the outside influences, not least the musicians, it is indubitably French in atmosphere and character. As Guillauhamon says: "We want to keep our soul. We are big enough now. In future, we must concentrate on improving facilities and giving people what they need."

Unsurprisingly, accommodation is a problem but the festival will doubtless spawn new hotels, improved camping facilities and, importantly for Marciac, more small businesses of a craft nature.

Before the jazz festival started Guillauhamon's school had 90 students; now there are more than 150, thanks mainly to the conservatory. Even when the festival is over, the village has a strong ongoing programme of concerts – classical as well as jazz.

Just in case you are in any doubt as to what it means to Marciac, stroll along to the Place du Chevalier Antras, next to the museum, Les Territoires du Jazz.

There you will find a statue of Marciac's patron saint, Wynton Marsalis, the jazz trumpeter. This August – as every year – Marsalis will be at Marciac in person. Teaching jazz at the high school, of course.

■ For details of this year's festival at Marciac and accommodation information: in the UK call 0891-241223 (calls charged at 6p a minute). In the US call the French government tourist office in New York on (212) 522 7500.

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Early birds catch cheapest crossings

Getting to France this summer is going to prove costlier than ever for UK travellers.

Cross-Channel fares have risen substantially on both short and long crossings. However, cheaper fares are available on some routes for early bookers.

Brittany Ferries has made certain that it will take a fair chunk of the market not only this year but in years to come by building the largest holiday business to France from the UK.

It has 2,800 holiday homes, gites and apartments, is working with 60 hotels, and represents Gites de France in the UK.

Ian Carruthers, Brittany Ferries managing director, reckons to increase that aspect of the business and expects that, by 2001, 20 per cent of its passengers will be travelling on holidays organised by the company itself.

■ Brittany Ferries (tel: 0890 380 360) is offering the following 10-day saver fares for car plus two adults and two children during high season: Portsmouth to Calais £228, Portsmouth-St Malo £245, Plymouth-Rosslare £224 and Poole-Cherbourg £228.

■ P&O Stena Line is doing a five-day return from Dover to Calais for a car plus nine people starting from £165 from July or a flexible return for the same number for £185. For reservations call: 0876 0600 0600.

■ From Portsmouth to Le Havre and Cherbourg, P&O's 10-day return crossing, high season, car plus two adults will be £230 with up to three children travelling free (additional adults £14, children £7). The standard return for the same numbers will be £294.

■ SeaFrance is doing a five-day return from Dover to Calais all summer for £113, car plus nine with standard return of £188. Super Apex bookings – those made before March 31 – come down to £88, car plus 9, and £148 plus 2. Tel: 01304 212888.

■ HoverSpeed is the sole operator from Folkestone to Boulogne and its apex standard return – book by March 31, valid for the rest of the year – is £128 for a car plus nine. Its hourly hovercraft from Dover to Calais (apex standard), again for a car plus nine, is £162. Its new fast-ferry service from Newhaven to

Dieppe starts April 19. High-season return for a car plus four is around £250, but if you book before the end of this month you can get a special fare of just £110. (Tel: 01304 665170.)

■ Eurotunnel's Keystone-Calais crossing for car, plus-as-many people as you can cram in, is £220 for a high-season open return but, if you want to do a five-day return you can obtain a ticket for £145. (Call 0890 355 355.)

■ Condor ferries operates from Weymouth to Poole or St Malo via the Channel Islands from April. (Tel: 01305 815551.)

■ Finally, a word about French Motorail. It is not cheap but a journey to, say, the south of France, and weighed against motorway tolls, hotel, petrol and meal costs, it looks competitively priced.

The snag is that facilities offered at Calais terminal – and on the trains – leave a lot to be desired, starting with lavatories. There are simply not enough of them, and they are very old. The motorail terminals are set tantalisingly apart from local shops, bars or restaurants. Facilities – and staff – barely cope at peak periods.

The meal I ate last summer at the Calais terminal, or rather didn't eat, was truly appalling with an overworked staff battling bravely against the odds to feed everyone who wanted a meal. Surely it is not beyond French Railways to provide a decent restaurant facility for what is virtually a captive audience?

Even better would be a shorter wait for vehicle loading and provision of a dining car. Once on the train you cannot move out of your carriage – indeed, there is very little option other than to lie down since space is at a premium in the cramped compartments.

Still, most families treat the overnight train as an adventure – and so it is in some respects. Nothing quite beats opening the blinds of your compartment in the morning and seeing the red-tiled rooftops of southern France flying past.

And knowing that you didn't spend two days on a French motorway to get there. Call 0870 645 545 for routes, fares and timetable information.

Jill James

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A gander at Gascon geese

In a region that has clearly never heard of the word 'vegetarian', Jill James asks some difficult questions

I was trying to be a well-behaved guest. Really. But as I popped the last morsel of *foie gras* into my mouth and raised a glass of Château Yquem to my lips, I could not resist asking my host some uncomfortable questions.

"Doesn't running a *foie gras* business concern you? Aren't you worried about animal rights protesters? And what about all those cheap goose livers from eastern Europe which are coming on to the market in ever-increasing quantities?"

Philippe Lacroix's response was immediate. "I'm not bothered what the other companies do. Our *foie gras* is a really natural product. We follow certain rules here. The geese are allowed to roam free."

Well, you might think, he would say that wouldn't he, since he is director of one of France's best known *foie gras* suppliers, Gimont-based Comtesse du Barry. But Lacroix is nothing if not a man of conviction. He searched for the English words to describe his company, which had sales for the 15 months to March last year of FFr260m (£26.72m) and profits of FFr2.6m, and added: "Not chemical but ethical - that is this company."

If you are visiting Auch, the Gascon capital (see the story above), you might as well drive the short distance to Montauban, outside the Gascon border, and in the *département* of Tarn et Garonne.

Do not be put off by Montauban's reputation as a rather dull provincial town. It has more than one saving grace. Most importantly, it was the home of Ingres, one of France's greatest artists. He died in Paris at the age of 83 in 1867 - but not before producing hundreds of glorious works. Happily, long before his death, his paintings, drawings and sculptures were sought after throughout Europe.

The people of his home town remain as strongly attached to

Well, I can only speak for the geese I saw on a visit to one of Lacroix's suppliers, Danièle Labadens, on her farm at St Martin Gimois in deepest Gascony. She showed me a well-fed flock with plenty of freedom to roam and good access to food and water. They looked fine - and, my goose spies tell me, it's easy to tell if they are upset.

I like to think I went with an open mind but I did not witness the *garoua* - the overfeeding process which produces the optimum-sized 900g-1kg liver so sought after by gourmets - and so abhorred by animal rights activists.

Perhaps a visit later in the year, when the *garoua* usually takes place - catching the Christmas market is all-important - might make one take a different view. As it is, it will have to wait.

But if you are going to spend time in Gascony it is as well to see what goes on while you are there. Goose and duck products are one of the mainstays of the region and, much as I love to eat them, I felt that I was about to quack at the end of two weeks.

Certainly, if there are vegetarians you want to upset, then I couldn't recommend a better place to send them.

Foie gras apart, you might say that I have come to the charms of Gascony late in life. Provence and Auvergne may have more spectacular scenery, the Pays Basque a more fiercely defended culture, the Loire a more sophisticated cuisine but Gascony has a different kind of appeal.

Its confident people - over-confident some might say since *gasconner* is the French verb "to boast" - are very fond of food and drink, keen rugby supporters, lovers of the corrida and of *la chasse* and generally enjoy the good things in life - including art, architecture, music and painting.

The region has always produced some diverse talents - the composer Ravel and the three musketeers. Their image is used just about everywhere, to sell everything, particularly drink. First world war soldier Marshal Foch was another Gascon and it is where Eleanor of Aquitaine was born.

Of course, I use the term Gascon loosely because of all the boundary changes which have taken place. When people talk about Gascony today they mainly mean the *département* of Gers - not the vast, former area of Gascony which stretched from the Pyrenees to the Tarn. A visit to the region would not

be complete without seeing the Gascon capital, Auch. Many might regard this market town as a rather dull place to spend a few days - and so it is if you are looking for sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll - but for quiet country town charm it is perfect.

The cathedral is well worth a

visit for its fine stained glass and

extraordinary carved choir stalls. The narrow, old, steep streets, alleyways, courtyards and stairways, called *pousterles*, are a challenge to the calf muscles. And market day is a must. You will really only get the best out of the area by renting a house, and buying and cooking the local produce. It also enables you to escape from a diet of duck, goose and duck.

All this and not even a mention of the great former Gascon cities of Pau, Lourdes and Tarbes. That will take another visit.

And, as I say, in Gascony, there's probably something for everyone - except vegetarians.

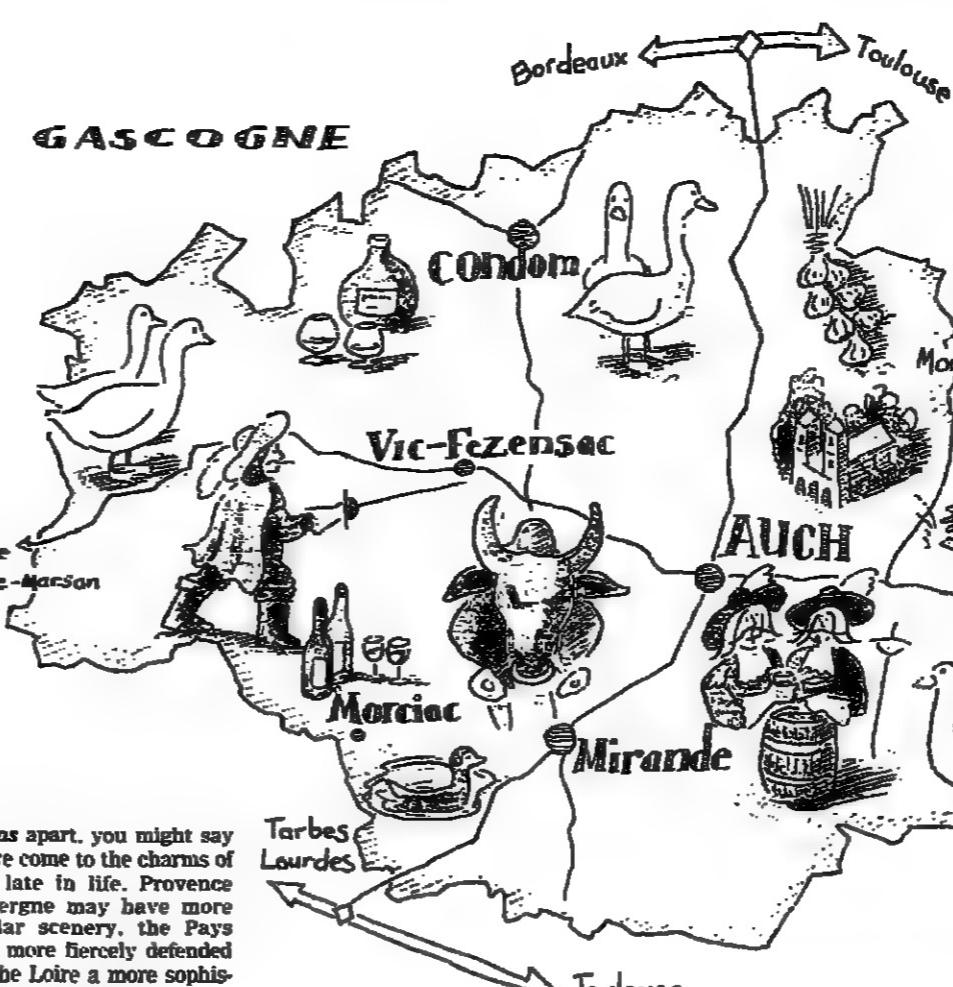
■ Getting there: Air France (0181-742 6600) flies from London to Toulouse three times a day.

Here (0590-996639) has a hire car desk at Toulouse airport.

Those who want to take their own vehicles could travel by Motorail from Calais or Paris to Toulouse (tel: 0890-848848).

■ Comtesse du Barry can be contacted on 0 803 00 33 32 or on the internet on <http://www.comtesse-dubarri.com.fr>

TRAVEL



Capital charm: Auch's cathedral features fine, glass windows and extraordinary carved choir stalls

Great artist brings a shine to his dullish home town

Jill James visits Montauban and the museum devoted to Ingres, whose work is showing at London's National Gallery

him as he was to them. He bequeathed them a huge chunk of his work, now housed in the pink-brick museum which carries his name.

The entire first floor is given over to his paintings and sketches. The drawings are masterpieces and many are on present show in London at an exhibition at the National Gallery until April 25.

Of course, it is better to see them *in situ*, so to speak, and to wander around Montauban, not a

particularly stunning town, but attractive enough for a walk, perhaps enjoying a drink in one of the many bars and cafés - a necessary relaxation in the heat of summer.

After spending a couple of hours in the Ingres museum - the somewhat old-fashioned presentation and damp smell brought to mind childhood trips to other such places - make sure you walk over the Pont Vieux, built in 1311, to take in the splendid views across the River Tarn.

advantage in the National Gallery, or almost anywhere else.

Montauban's history is as lively - and tragic - as any town in the region. Try to see as many of the old *bastides* - fortified towns and villages - as possible, many unspoilt, barring the odd architectural aberration.

The town of Moissac is not to be missed - even if you only see the front of the ancient abbey of St Pierre and catch the Saturday market. Green Michelin rightly gives the place two stars. The

sculpture above the south doorway is reckoned to be the finest Romanesque in France, its theme being St John's vision of the Apocalypse. The cloisters (late 11th century) are also rich in sculpture and a museum shows the influence its sculpture has had on the region.

Elsewhere local tourist offices will be happy to give you *bastide* itineraries, but you will do just as well to drive yourself around, stopping at random, crossing in and out of what used to be Gas-

cony. Very few of these fortified towns and villages disappoint and some are gloriously pretty and untouched.

Montauban is also a good base for seeing the Aveyron gorges.

■ Jill James stayed in Bardigues, *skirt from the bastide of Avillar, with French Charters, the French house and villa specialists. Bardigues proved an ideal base for visiting Montauban and the surrounding region and the house would suit a large family. Tel: 0171-722 0722*

■ She travelled by Motorail to Toulouse (tel: 0890-848848) and by Seacat from Dover to Calais (call 0890-242011).

■ Michelin green guides to Tarn and Gascony are recommended reading.

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BOXING

Shy guy of fight game bids to be ring king

Lennox Lewis tonight seeks the undisputed world title. Keith Wheatley reports

Almost 10 years ago a whim took me to Hull, the remote fishing port on Britain's eastern flank. It was a foul night, with freezing rain sweeping in from the North Sea.

A few hundred bedraggled boxing fans queued to get into the City Hall. It seemed an inauspicious start to a career that reaches its zenith tonight in New York's Madison Square Garden.

One would have needed to have been living in an extraterrestrial cave for the past week not to know that Lennox Lewis, Britain's finest, is due to meet Evander Holyfield in a fight that will produce the undisputed world heavyweight champion.

Even Lewis, an intrinsically retiring and shy man, has been swept up in a publicity machine that (accurately for once) pitches the bout as Fight of the Decade.

There was no television and no public relations campaign in Hull. In fact, I think I was the media, with the exception of a part-time boxing correspondent from the local evening paper.

My sports editor at the time was dubious about the whole story, but reasoned that if I wanted to waste my time pottering in strange provincial towns watching unknown boxers, then he couldn't be bothered to oppose the idea.

My first knowledge of Lewis had come some weeks earlier when flying to Toronto. The Air Canada in-flight magazine contained an article detailing the boxer's move to England. It was written with some bitterness, since, as an amateur, Lewis had won one of Canada's few Olympic gold medals at the 1988 Seoul games and the country's sports writers were understandably peeved at the prospect of virtually their only potential excuse to travel the world defecting to London.

At the time I was one of the few UK reporters with any interest in the business

The winner will be the unmilitated heavyweight champion of the world. This will unite the secular and the spiritual'

entourage of dodgy-looking hangers-on swept into the seedy hall - all camel coats and panamas.

It took the Olympic champion just under three minutes to dispose of his opponent, a Yorkshire journeyman who had been driving a coal truck the previous day.

Levitt and his people swept out, heading for Hull airport and the executive jet that had brought them from London. Leaving the City Hall, the tycoon, who has now fallen into disrepute, nodded a "Well done" to his boy. Later, I sat with Lewis and his mother, Violet, and talked with him about chess

and American novels. It was by far the most enjoyable part of my only visit to Hull.

Much has changed in the intervening decade (not least that Lewis will earn \$1m for tonight's rumpus) but much has not. Lewis remains a highly unusual boxer, who follows his own agenda and remains curiously aloof from the fight game's Runyon-esque extremes.

Violet still goes to all the training camps and cooks

year-old who lives with his mother and brother in suburban Hertfordshire.

In his business life Lewis's instincts have led him away from the high-profile promoters such as Frank Warren and Don King (at least until this fight), and into a long-term relationship with London-based accountant Panos Eliades. From an office near the British Museum, Eliades has a spectrum of business interests but only one boxer.

"When Roger Levitt went bust and all of that, he asked me to buy Lennox's contract. It was for a small sum, just enough to pay a legal bill, and I did it to help out a neighbour," recalled Eliades.

"I knew nothing about boxing them although I've had to learn a bit over the years. I do know that Lennox is one of the most admirable men I have known."

Until now, one of Lewis's strongest instincts was to stay away from Don King, but the irresistible forces of money and warriorhood that made this fight inevitable led the British boxer into the temporary embrace of the electric-haired American promoter.

"Boxers say there's only one King and at this level they're right," said Lewis last week. "He's the big man. He needs to be involved. He tried to get me to sign with

him in 1993 but he had Tyson and I didn't want to be second string."

King has elaborate theories (issued at the vocal speed of a tobacco auctioneer) as to why Lewis is not better-known. Certainly in the US, the heavyweight's profile is not so much low as ground-level. A trawl through the Boxing Hall of Fame web site for Lewis's name brought this to the screen: "Sorry, we couldn't find any documents that match your query. (HINT: check your spelling.)"

The King theory, or at least a summarised version, runs as follows: "Lennox Lewis was a hazy figure in the UK. I alerted him to his identity and now he's claiming it," explained Teflon Don in London recently. "He was the invisible man. Now that he is a self-proclaimed man of British descent he's claiming his country as his own."

This is a new Lennox Lewis fighting Evander Holyfield. The winner will be the unmilitated, the undaunted, the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world. This will unite the secular and the spiritual."

All this will be news to Lewis, who is content with his Jamaican heritage, British birth and Canadian upbringing. For a black boy who was teased at school in

Toronto for his cockney accent, a touch of ethnic ambiguity is nothing new.

The sheer calmness, rationality and equanimity of Lewis have created a wake of debate throughout his career, with many arguing that he lacks the aggression or killer instinct essential for a champion. Critics cite his 1994 defeat by the mentally unbalanced and technically deficient Oliver McCall as evidence. It was a poor fight, a one-off night in a decade and Lewis knows it.

Two years later he defeated McCall easily in a rematch.

In the past six weeks at a training camp in Pennsylvania, Lewis has demonstrated a ferocious commitment to the task at hand. "When I step into that 20x30 ring, I ain't looking out of it until the end."

"I'm gonna go in there and definitely hit Evander Holyfield," he told a news conference last week.

What will have me cheering him on is the man's integrity. Boxing was once taught in schools because it was thought to promote manliness, courage, respect for others, and guts. In the era of Mike Tyson and Prince Naseem, such a view became laughable.

But win or lose tonight, Lewis has given boxing back at least as much as he has taken from it.

Vestey hunts and is no apologist. But the enthusiastic aunts and grandparents who nurtured an affection for racing in the young Vestey - his father died in the second world war - have not produced a man blinkered to criticisms of country sports.

He was clearly concerned for Castle Sweep and the 10 flights of hurdles and six rivals he faced, for as the Cleeve Hurdle drew closer, Vestey grew increasingly self-absorbed.

The gelding was bought in Ireland and has already given his owner much pleasure; he should have a few years racing left in him before he departs to Stow Park for retirement, joining mares and foal at the Vestey nursery.

In the paddock, as the runners circled, Vestey talked to his jockey, Richard Johnson. The owner's own racing experience amounts to one ride in a charity event a few years ago - at Cheltenham, of course. "Too far, too frightened," Vestey laughed in ruling out another.

The Cleeve Hurdle proved a testing four-minute examination for horse and owner. The racecourse commentator was gentle on his chairman's feelings as Castle Sweep became detached from the leaders, then rallied to pass tired horses up the hill to finish fourth. Lady Rebeca, bred by his wife Celia and trained by her sister Henrietta Knight, won the Stayers' Hurdle. That day was also Celia's first back at the races after a brain haemorrhage.

Time after time, Cheltenham provides such poignant moments. There are the tragedies, too. Animal welfare groups and the anti-hunting lobby protest that injuries and fatalities make National Hunt racing an unjustifiable pursuit.

Vestey then discreetly slipped Castle Sweep's groom a crisp note for his efforts. It is an old tradition that recognises who cares most for horses at the track and at the stables. The chairman of Cheltenham is not one to overlook it.

MICHAEL THOMPSON-NOEL

It could soon be time to pull up stumps

According to cricket's pundits, it was arrogance, complacency and lack of investment during their heyday that laid the seeds of West Indies' calamitous fall from grace in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, this week.

That may be true, but it is my belief that cricket's days as a sport of any significance are almost over. It will linger on, here and there. But I do not see how it will survive in the dog-eat-dog environment of big-money, 21st century sport.

West Indies' absolute cricketing heyday ran from June 1980 to February 1985.

In that period they were

undefeated in 27 Test series,

winning 19 of them.

However, this week they

were dismissed for 51 runs in

the second innings in the

first Test against Australia,

their lowest Test total. It

was their sixth consecutive

Test loss, following a 5-0

series thumping by South

Africa.

A players' strike before

the South African tour

revealed the open divisions

between the team and the

West Indies Cricket Board,

while once in South Africa,

captain Brian Lara's

slipshod approach both to

the captaincy and his own

batting betrayed the

ambiguities developed by

leading West Indies players

over the years.

In any case, the stream of

WICB cricketing talent has

dried up, partly because

boys are being seduced by

rival sports, and partly

through the failure of the

board to invest in a

development programme so

that all the different islands,

in the past six weeks at a

training camp in Pennsylvania, Lewis has demonstrated a ferocious commitment to the task at hand. "When I step into that 20x30 ring, I ain't looking out of it until the end."

"I'm gonna go in there and definitely hit Evander Holyfield," he told a news conference last week.

What will have me cheering him on is the man's integrity. Boxing was once taught in schools because it was thought to promote manliness, courage, respect for others, and guts. In the era of Mike Tyson and Prince Naseem, such a view became laughable.

But win or lose tonight,

Lewis has given boxing back at least as much as he has taken from it.

No wonder satellite broadcaster BSkyB, in which ageing media mogul Rupert Murdoch has a large stake, wants to get its hands on

Manchester United, the most

famous sports club in the

world, for which it has bid a

stack of money. What BSkyB

is really hoping is to get its

hands on the Manchester

United manager Alex

Ferguson, whose extreme

competitiveness long ago

made him a pain in the neck.

Ferguson is a desperately

poor loser, and often

excoriates referees. I was

relieved, therefore, to see top

English ref Paul Durkin

defending his decisions to

dismiss United's Paul

Scholes and Chelsea's

Roberto Di Matteo from the

pitch during last Sunday's

goal-less FA Cup clash in

Manchester.

The dismissals were

pomposly criticised by

Ferguson, but Durkin would

not be bullied. After

watching replays of each of

the incidents, he said the

sendings-off were justified.

Quite right. Durkin is a

splendid fellow while

BSkyB is a whinge-bag.

To win a tennis set, a

player must win six games.

He could win his own three

service games with 12

strokes and win his

opponent's three service

games with no strokes

whatsoever - if his opponent

double-faulted every time.

I am writing to Paul

Smith, the quiz's executive

producer, offering to pay

him £125,000 if he will have

me on his crummy show.

HOW TO FUND IT

There were angry protests this week when Sporting Index, a leading UK spread-betting firm, had to cancel a bet. It had challenged punters to guess how many times Betty

Boothroyd, speaker of the

House of Commons, would shout "Order" to quell noisy

members of parliament

during the Budget speech.

The bet was declared void

when the firm realised that

the deputy speaker sits in

the speaker's chair during

the Budget speech. This led

to several protests by

customers who had sold the

bet (gone low) on the

FT WEEKEND

THE LOOKING GLASS

The guy next to me in the Manhattan movie theatre is crunching his popcorn and giggling. Leaning back in his seat, stuffing his face and guffawing.

Slapstick comedy doesn't usually do it for me, but this was funny. Imagine a cross between Rowan Atkinson and John Cleese sucking a bee sting out of the thigh of a strange and beautiful woman who happens to have just fallen out of a window onto a haystack and straight into his arms. That same hybrid, a waiter on a lime-green horse, then trots into a dining room full of stuck-up dignitaries at an engagement party and dismounts to kiss the bride-to-be under the table.

It mattered little at first that the film was set in late 1930s Italy, amid the blatant rise of fascism. It mattered little that there was a swastika painted on the side of a horse, or that a sign on a shop front read "No Dogs or Jews". I still couldn't help but join in with the giggling of my

To smile is to defile the century's greatest suffering

Suzanne Glass, a grandchild of Holocaust refugees, has second thoughts about a popular tragic-comic film that is hoping for Oscar glory

popcorn-crunching neighbour.

So engrossed was I in this farcical fairy-tale of the Jewish waiter's seduction of his gentle princess, that I was laughing right up until the moment I started to cry and even beyond.

Roberto Benigni, who wrote, acted in and directed *Life is Beautiful*, knows very well that he is leading his audiences to tears even as he is making them laugh. Juxtaposed with the colour film of fantasy and courtship are the black-and-white reels of deportation and brutality. Juxtaposed with the waiter and the princess's magical love story, is the tale of their child Joshua. This is the tale of how, in an attempt to protect him, his father tells him the

concentration camp is a big game, that he shouldn't believe what he sees because everyone's pretending and that if he plays by the rules he will win a real army tank as a going-home present.

And we watch as Joshua learns those rules, as his father teaches him that you win points by never feeling hungry and by never aching with longing for your mother. When the film was over, the audience gave a standing ovation and I thought: "Yes, yes, Benigni is a genius. He's found a new way to portray this human tragedy. He's created a fable out of the factual and he's pulled it off with sensitivity."

Before the film was released in London I began to spread the

word. "This is pure brilliance. You have to go and see it."

And I would have gone on boasting box office figures, had my mother not come back from a real army tank as a going-home present.

On the front page under a headline, "Fury at Benigni", a Holocaust survivor was quoted as saying that the film was "nauseating and offensive", and that, "to make us appear as though we can laugh and joke about it is bordering on the obscene".

Benigni doesn't actually laugh and joke about the Holocaust at all. Far from it. He laughs at the protagonist's antics, he ridicules racism, and he smiles at the triumph of the human spirit. But

I, as the grandchild of Holocaust refugees, was troubled enough by this woman's comments to see *Life is Beautiful* a second time.

And this time there was a bent old woman next to me with her hand in a box of Maltesers. She didn't eat any of them. She just bawled into the box throughout the film and at one point whispered to me in a heavy foreign accent: "I was there. It was nothing like that. This is a dangerous thing to do. You people don't understand."

In the days that followed I thought of the Holocaust survivors I have known and wondered how they might have reacted to the film - for example, the old man I met, who had bitten the concentration camp

number off his arm and swallowed it, so that he might not be identified as a Jew when he escaped. Would the interweaving of fantasy and reality have offended him?

And our Dutch family friend, who watched the smoke rising in a camp as his wife and little boy "took a shower". How would he have reacted to a stylised version of the camps?

I hypothesised about these people's reactions and slowly I began to reach a new conclusion.

However deserving *Life is Beautiful* may be of the many Oscars for which it has been nominated, however pure its intention to be the last big project of this millennium to keep the Holocaust in our minds,

we must surely understand that for survivors, interlacing humour and make-believe with the horrors of the Final Solution is just not on.

Because for most of them, the Holocaust is untouchable, untreatable with anything but the harsh reality of documentary. For them, taken to its logical conclusion, *Life is Beautiful* is revisionism and they tremble to think how it will be when they are no longer here to say: "No, that is not how it was."

Of course, my observations beg the question of what to do when it comes to the artistic representation of Bosnia or of Rwanda or of Stalinist Russia. It also raises the issue of the viability of life as art when it comes to human suffering.

And here the contradiction will remain. If genocide on celluloid is to be made palatable enough for those who were not there to confront it, it will always be inaccurate enough for those who were there to decry it.

months. But after that, it can apply for a mining licence, and God knows what will be dumped in it, to the detriment of children's health.

"He also says the operation will create 57 jobs, but what he doesn't say is that only 10 of them will be local - cleaners, security and maintenance workers."

"This area was open-casted in the 1940s and 1950s, but there was an emergency than and we had been just through a war and needed as much coal as we could get. But there's no need for the coal today - as can be seen by the number of mines that were closed."

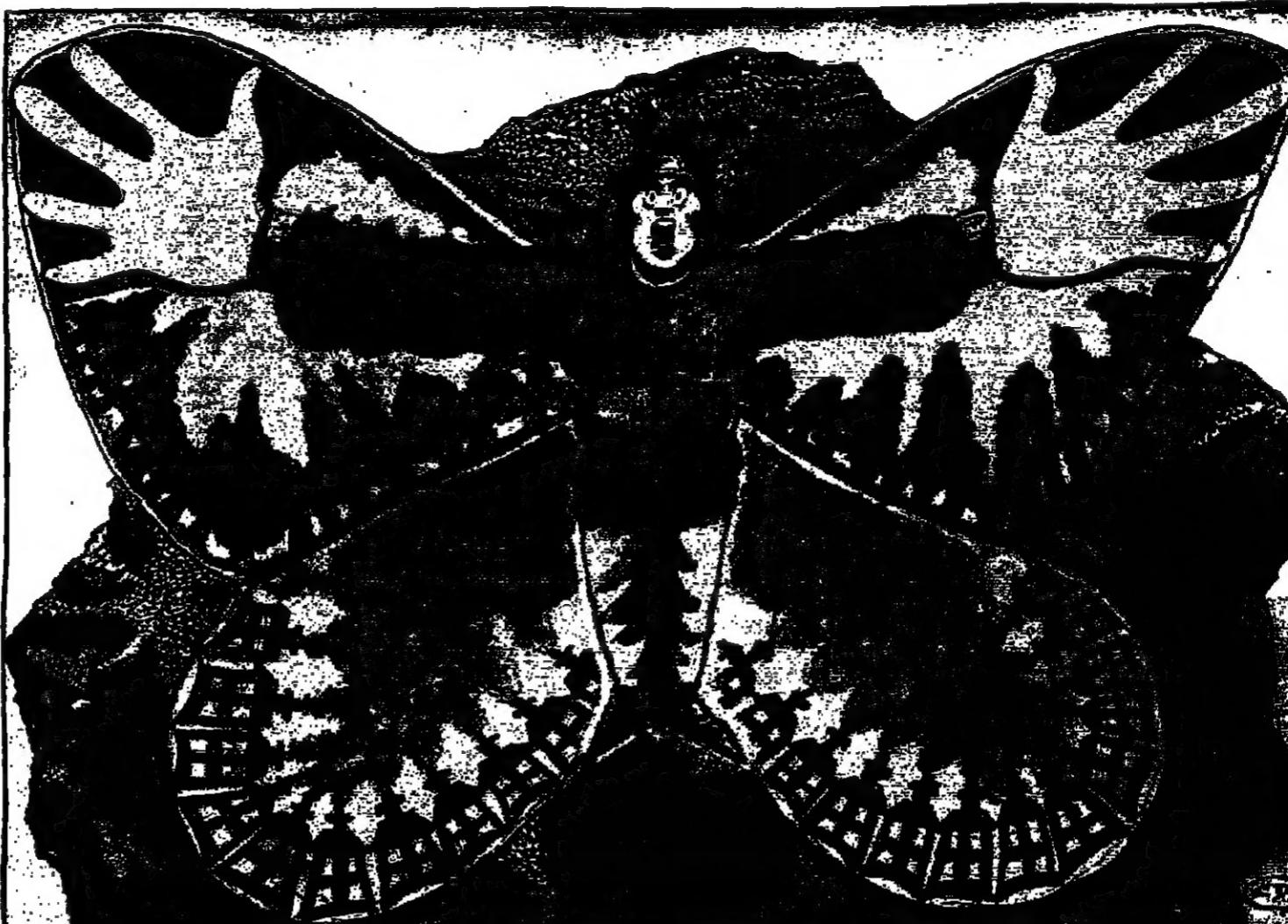
A miner for 35 of his years, Sweet said: "We have suffered deeply, and we take a delight in the fact that the land has been recovering to former beauty." North Warwickshire has received European Union funding to speed up this process with the planting of trees.

"We have learned to live without mining. New businesses have come to the area. A light industry estate is to be created. What will these people think when their new premises are enveloped by 24-hour noise and dust and a gridlocked A5?"

Jim Avery, 54, a former coal board manager whose house on Dunn's Lane faces what may be one of the exits from the proposed mine, said that during the post-war open-cast operations, surrounding roads were "destroyed by rivers of mud and dust clogged the air. This place was a hellhole. We had all that havoc all over again."

Other villagers are equally enraged: "In 1970, when I moved here, I never imagined they would rape our beautiful countryside again," said Ken Careless. "The village has had its fair share of filth, dust, smoke and desolation."

Bob Alisop, 71-year-old former miner, declared: "We've got to fight this."



METROPOLIS

Village casts off its past

Cal McCrystal considers a paradox - a pit community volubly opposed to mining

It is a mining village that lost its mine. Still fresh in the minds of the many jobless ex-miners is the war they waged to save their pit and their livelihoods. Today, with local unemployment of more than 5 per cent, the inhabitants of Dordon in north Warwickshire do not exude prosperity. At 4pm on a weekday, the local supermarket is empty.

Yet a fierce campaign is under way to resist a plan to resume coal extraction there. More than 3,000 anti-mining signatures have been delivered to the county council. Pubs are being leafleted, and small halls and social clubs resound with clamour. "Over our dead bodies!" cry the villagers of Dordon.

It is an extraordinary protest, given the hand-wringing that greeted the break-up of the National Coal Board and pit closures across the land under Britain's last Tory government. So why, in a village nourished since early in the 19th century by its coal seams, is there this anti-mining fury?

At first, a visitor observes nothing untoward. Dordon, on the A5 north-west of Athertonstone, about 20 miles from the centre of Birmingham, is a nondescript sort of place one might encounter when taking a wrong turn off a roundabout.

Its narrow streets of terraced Victorian cottages rise and fall with the lumpy ter-

rain. But it is a quiet, surprisingly fastidious place where neighbours are helpful to one another and watch behind curtains in the hope of identifying an early morning dog-walker whose animal fouls the pavements.

The source of the trouble lies at the village edge where a muddy track rises through a knobby landscape of briar and birch, and buckthorn. The track, flattening out into an expanse of dense copse and barbed-wire fences, yields glimpses of dull-black nuggets, and you realise you must be walking on a worked-out surface coal seam.

I paused here with two Dordon residents, June Owen, a retired schoolteacher, and John Coxon, a retired miner. Ahead of us the land gradually fell again: in one direction into the Anker Valley; in another, towards a large water-hole, which once drained a small drift mine and is now called Fisherman's Pond. Later in the year, frogs will spawn here, and dragonflies, and great pond-snails will congregate along with men who once dug for coal and now fish for carp.

"A group of ex-miners like myself clubbed together to reclaim this little spot when the owner committed suicide," Coxon said. "A lot of us have disabilities - bad lungs and injuries. We really needed somewhere above ground that would give us pleasure and fill in the day - and be healthy. So we created a nature reserve."

Owen said: "You should be here in summer to see the butterflies - especially the Dingy Skipper

and the wall butterfly which is quite rare"

coal-mining village reject fibn contract to supply PowerGen with up to 35m tonnes of coal over the next five years. It was also awarded an £800m contract to supply Eastern Electricity with 28m tonnes over a similar period.

National Power has agreed to take 18m tonnes from the company up to March 2001.

You should be here in summer to see the butterflies - especially the Dingy Skipper and the wall butterfly which is quite rare'

said No. The local borough council is also hostile. Within weeks, Warwickshire county council will make its decision. If the answer again is No, there will be a public inquiry.

RJB Mining, whose chief executive is Richard Budge, is the nation's biggest coal producer. It recently won a

contract to supply PowerGen with up to 35m tonnes of coal over the next five years. It was also awarded an £800m contract to supply Eastern Electricity with 28m tonnes over a similar period. National Power has agreed to take 18m tonnes from the company up to March 2001.

But open-cast mining tends to generate more than electricity. Coal-hungry PowerGen, for example, has attracted the fury of German environmentalists because a mining company it part-owns wants to demolish Neudorf, a 700-year-old village near Leipzig, to establish an open-cast mine.

The villagers of Dordon are not environmental fanatics. They are loath to pronounce on problems outside the scope of their knowledge or powers of apprehension.

But they are volatile about the open-cast threat and clearly have a grudge against Budge.

RJB Mining has promised to replace all the soil removed in order to extract the coal. It has suggested traffic-calming measures on the A5, and claims the project will help reduce coal imports. According to John Ribe, RJB's director of planning, the proposal would

"cause no demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance" and there would be "significant long-term benefits" from an "imaginative restoration scheme".

Last week RJB said: "The bottom line is that open-cast mining is not the ogre it is often made out to be. At Dor-

don, 57 new jobs will be created if plans to remove the coal and restore the derelict area are approved, all at no cost to the ratepayer."

"RJB Mining has proven its commitment to deep mining in Warwickshire, but as a company we need a balance - 80 per cent deep mine and 20 per cent open-cast - to serve the needs of our customers."

Ray Sweet, chairman of Warwickshire county council, on which he represents Dordon, can scarcely contain his anger. "Budge says he will need to mine for 31

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ARCADIA

I went to the well for water, and I left in peace

World Bank official Nick Burnett explains how a week spent in a west African village strengthened his commitment to combat rampant poverty

I have just returned to my office at World Bank headquarters in Washington after spending a week organised by ActionAid, the international development charity, in one of the poorest villages in the world, Demfaya Njagga in The Gambia, west Africa.

On my last evening, one of the older boys in the primary school came to say goodbye. I told him I was sad to be leaving the 400 villagers, especially the children. "Don't be sad," he said. "You came in peace. You leave in peace. We will be in your thoughts." And how they are in my thoughts.

I manage the bank's programmes in education, health, nutrition, population and social protection in 16 west and central African countries. My time in Demfaya, in the Central River district north of the River Gambia, was part of the executive development programme introduced by James Wolfensohn, the bank president, for managers.

I deliberately avoided selecting a village through one of the bank-financed projects. So I was surprised, on arrival, to discover that Demfaya primary school had been built in 1994 using World Bank financing. I visited the school, as I did every other institution and location in the village. I went inside every single hut, with their mud

walls and floors, and roofs of thatch or corrugated iron.

I travelled by horse-drawn cart the 1km to the nearest health centre in Karmata and also the weekly market. I went on a wild pig hunt in the bush and was entertained one evening by travelling musicians. I drank a lot of sweet green tea.

As far as possible, I was a villager for a week. I slept on a sack mattress stuffed with grass and used a sack pillow filled with earth. I ate the local diet of cereals, groundnuts and occasional meat, chicken or fish, without vegetables or fruits. I went to the well for water to wash myself. I used a flashlight and candles at night. A local teacher interpreted for me as I do not speak Wolof, the main language at Demfaya.

The villagers were extremely poor, existing on perhaps half the national average of \$1 a person a day. They grow maize, sorghum and millet for food and groundnuts for cash income. Almost every adult is illiterate; by contrast, almost every child is in school.

I felt and experienced things of which I had book knowledge alone, such as the difficulty of getting basic health care, the great thirst for education among young and old, and the effectiveness of programmes such as ActionAid's.

I also learned things I did not know before. I met almost every person, including the most severely disadvantaged, many of whom never come out of their compounds: the physically disabled; the mentally ill; the widow whose husband had just died, leaving her destitute with six children; the

access to health care; inadequate food during the rainy season; environmental decline with agricultural yields falling and trees being cut down; and poor communications - bad roads and no phones.

I was also struck by two problems the villagers did not mention. First, lack of information. Not a single person knew the world price of groundnuts, the key economic variable for them. Adults and children were learning to read, but there was nothing to read in the village beyond school books, which were in short supply.

The second problem has to do with the lack of role models. Schoolchildren wanted to be president, ministers, soldiers, police or teachers (boys), and nurses or teachers (girls). Not a single child wanted to use his or her education to become a private-sector farmer or a business person. Yet The Gambia's economic future, as elsewhere, hinges on the development of a vibrant private sector.

What am I going to do with the knowledge and experience in only a week? First, while I am reasonably encouraged that the types of health and education project we are supporting are very appropriate, I am now very concerned about social protection for the disadvantaged. Neither donors nor non-governmental organisa-

tions are doing much for them. I am not sure what should be done, by the bank and others, but it needs attention. Second, I intend to see how information and literate materials and access to a wider range of role models might be made available to those not yet connected to the global information economy.

Mainly, however, I am going to have the villagers of Demfaya in my thoughts every day. For every decision, I will ask myself what will be its impact on the poor in The Gambia or the other countries for which I have some responsibility. Using techniques learned from the business schools, I am already trying to reduce the bureaucratic impediments to my staff's getting on with their work; after the village visit I am even more impatient with the bureaucracy of the bank, though I recognise that some of it is inevitable.

The World Bank recently adopted a mission statement: "To fight poverty with passion and professionalism for lasting results." I hope the people of Demfaya will make me a better professional; I know they have made me more passionate in the fight against global poverty. I went to Demfaya in peace. I left in peace, and its people will surely be forever in my thoughts.